

Eighteenth-Century Scottish Views

on

Primitive Societies:

Adam Ferguson

John Millar

William Robertson

by

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Preface

This paper will examine eighteenth-century Scottish views on primitive societies from the standpoint of the following three works:

1. Adam Ferguson. An Essay on the History of Civil Society 1771, ed. Duncan Forbes. Edinburgh, 1966.
2. John Millar. The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks: or, An Inquiry into the Circumstances which give Rise to Influence and Authority, in the Different Members of Society, 4th ed. London, 1805.
3. William Robertson. The History of America, Bks. I-VIII, 1st ed. 2 vols. London, 1777.  
The History of America, Bks. IX-X, 1st ed. London, 1796.

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These works reflect widely different attitudes and approaches toward primitive societies, and thus represent a broad range of eighteenth-century Scottish opinion. Ferguson's appraisal of primitive societies is sympathetic, Millar's is unsympathetic, while Robertson is considerably more objective.

Each work will be discussed in a separate chapter. The chapters will be arranged in chronological sequence according to each work's date of first publication (1767, 1771, and 1777, respectively). And the works will be compared with one another as the paper advances.

Within each chapter, the author's evaluation of primitive societies will be carefully examined in the light of his more general outlook and prejudices (as expressed in the work under consideration). Thus, each chapter will consider:

- I. The author's intentions.
- II. His methods and prejudices.
- III. His analyses of primitive societies.
- IV. His evaluations of primitive societies in the light of his own culture.

Throughout the paper, an effort will be made to allow each author to speak for himself, insofar as possible under the format outlined above. Wherever a striking relationship may be drawn between the thought of Ferguson, Millar, or Robertson and

another eighteenth-century Scottish writer, it will be presented, in an effort to reconstruct some of the issues regarding primitive societies which were most actively debated in eighteenth-century Scotland.

An Introduction will be included to provide some insight into the historical and biographical aspects of the works and authors under discussion, and a Conclusion will be appended which will attempt to summarize some of their many arguments.

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### Introduction

The eighteenth century witnessed in Scotland a renaissance which has never been surpassed in Northern Britain. As Smollett's Matthew Bramble was to exclaim in The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, "Edinburgh is a hot-bed of genius. - I have had the good fortune to be made acquainted with many authors of the first distinction; such as the two Humes, Robertson, Smith, Wallace, Blair, Ferguson, Wilkie, &c. and I have found them all as agreeable in conversation as they are instructive and entertaining in their writings."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, his cry was heard in the London of Smollett, James Thomson, James Boswell, and Lord Bute, and was carried from thence into the France of Voltaire, where Edinburgh in her glory became known as 'the Athens of the North.'

But there was also another Scotland, the semi-feudal Scotland of the Highlands, of the '15 rebellion, and of the '45. And there was also another Edinburgh, the Edinburgh whose crushing poverty undoubtedly suggested Smollett's lines:

"Enough, enough; all this we knew before;  
'Tis infamous, I grant it, to be poor;"<sup>2</sup>

For this was an Edinburgh in which all classes of Scottish society lived in close proximity on different floors of the same tenements, at least during the earlier half of the century, and in which the different occupants, as a result, were intensely aware of the varied patterns of human life.

Almost certainly, this intermingling of different social classes within the capital city, and the juxtaposition of an almost feudal rural society and a highly cosmopolitan urban community within the country as a whole, may have occasioned the great interest of eighteenth-century Scottish writers in comparative states of society. Furthermore, as a corollary, it

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<sup>1</sup>Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker (New York, 1960), p.234.

<sup>2</sup>Tobias Smollett, "Advice," in Plays and Poems, P.205, cited by Margaret M. Fitzgerald, First Follow Nature (New York, 1947), p.90.

may help to account for their great interest in primitive societies in particular.<sup>3</sup> For as Duncan Forbes has observed, "the science of the Enlightenment is seen in its most mature and sophisticated form in Scotland."<sup>4</sup>

In her essay, "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origins," Lois Whitney has written that "the Scottish writers who were engaged in the investigation of primitive man and primitive poetry fall into two groups, one located at Aberdeen, chiefly at Marischal College, the other at Edinburgh. The controlling personalities in the Aberdeen group seem to have been Thomas Blackwell, author of the Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, and Thomas Reid, the philosopher; the central figures at Edinburgh were Henry Home (Lord Kames), author of Elements of Criticism and Sketches of the History of Man; Adam Smith, the economist, author of Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages, and Hugh Blair, professor of rhetoric and belles lettres at the University of Edinburgh. Between these two groups there were many cross-influences."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to these two groups, the existence of a third group in Glasgow, which "since the Restoration, ... had been reckoned as the second city in the kingdom, and the first for trade and manufacture,"<sup>6</sup> might be suggested. Such a group would have been strongly influenced by the philosopher Francis Hutcheson at the University of Glasgow, and would have included John Millar, Professor of Law at Glasgow and author of The Origin

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<sup>3</sup> A wide variety of other influences - including classical and Biblical traditions, parochial instruction, utopian satire, recent exploration, and important religious and philosophical movements - is lucidly discussed in Hoxie Neale Fairchild's The Noble Savage (New York, 1928), and in Lois Whitney's Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934).

<sup>4</sup> Duncan Forbes, ed. An Essay on the History of Civil Society 1767, by Adam Ferguson, (Edinburgh, 1966), p.xiii.

<sup>5</sup> Lois Whitney, "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origins," Modern Philology, XXI (May 1924), 338.

<sup>6</sup> G.M. Trevelyan, Illustrated English Social History; Volume Three: The Eighteenth Century (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1960), p.245.

of the Distinction of Ranks..., Adam Smith, who was a Glaswegian, Reid who, with Millar and Smith, was a member of the Glasgow Literary Society, and Hume, who was an honorary member of the same society.

A list of other eighteenth-century Scots, whose writings touched on primitive societies, would include: Adam Ferguson, author of An Essay on the History of Civil Society, William Robertson, author of The History of America, James Macpherson, author and critic of the Ossianic sagas, James Beattie, author of The Minstrel..., James Burnett (Lord Monboddo), author of Antient Metaphysics, or, the Science of Universals, Henry Mackenzie, author of The Man of Feeling and The Man of the World, John Ogilvie, author of Britannia, a national Epic Poem, James Thomson, author of Liberty and The Seasons, John Gregory, author of A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World, William Duff, author of An Essay on Original Genius, and its Various Modes of Exertion in Philosophy and the Fine Arts, Particularly in Poetry, and James Dunbar, author of Essays on the History of Mankind in Rude and Cultivated Ages.

This paper addresses itself to the evaluations of primitive societies reflected in the works cited above by Ferguson, Millar and Robertson.

Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) was born at Logierait, Perthshire, and was educated at the University of St. Andrews. A Highlander with a Gaelic accent, he was made Deputy Chaplain of the Black Watch (1745) for the purpose of keeping an eye on the son of the Duke of Atholl. In this military capacity, he was led to travel on the Continent. In 1757 he gave up the ministry in order to settle in Edinburgh, having succeeded David Hume as Librarian of the Advocates' Library, after which he became Professor of Natural Philosophy (1759), Mental Philosophy (1764), and Moral Philosophy (1774), successively, at the University of Edinburgh. During these years he also became a member of numerous intellectual organizations, among them the Select Society - which included Robertson, Hume, Smith,

Monboddo, and Kames -, the Philosophical Society - along with Robertson, Hume, Smith, Kames, Mackenzie, Blair, Beattie, Gerard, Reid, and Dunbar -, the Poker Club - with Robertson, Hume, Smith, and Blair -, and the Glasgow Literary Society. He abandoned his position at the University in order to return to the Continent as the tutor of the young Lord Chesterfield, and he journeyed to Philadelphia during the height of the American Revolutionary War. Upon his return from America, he was struck by paralysis "occasioned by free living"<sup>7</sup> and was forced to become a vegetarian, finishing his days in the Chair of Mathematics, collecting the salary earned by a colleague. Of his disposition, a contemporary wrote that he was "vivacious, charming, and could easily be provoked."<sup>8</sup>

Ferguson's principal work concerning primitive societies An Essay on the History of Civil Society, was first published in 1767. It reflects his strong admiration for many aspects of primitive life, particularly the communal spirit and moral integrity which he believes characterize primitive communities. Conversely, Ferguson decries many aspects of his own society, stressing in particular the warlike and materialistic spirit, which he finds pervasive in contemporary European civilization.

The second of these men is John Millar (1735-1801), or "Foxy Millar" as he was later referred to by his students. He was born at Kirk o' Shotts, the son of a Presbyterian minister. While a student at the University of Glasgow, he became a disciple of Adam Smith, and subsequently, through Smith's influence, was made tutor to Lord Kame's son. Through Kames, Millar was introduced to David Hume, whose nephew became one of Millar's most distinguished pupils. In 1761, with Kame's <sup>WAK</sup> and Smith's support, Millar was given the Chair of Civil Law at Glasgow, where he had joined the Literary Society in 1752. He <sup>nsf</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Dugald Stewart, "Life of Ferguson," in H.G. Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1901), p.116.

<sup>8</sup> Dugald Stewart, "Life of Ferguson," from H.G. Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1901), p.109.



married in 1759, and of his personal life it is stated that "for a long time, Mr. Millar, though exposed to many smaller misfortunes, was almost exempt from family affliction. He lost, indeed, two infants; but all his other children grew up around him, and repaid his cares by the most lively affection. It was not till 1791 that he had occasion to support their mother, under what might almost be considered the first breach in the family."<sup>9</sup> Such a personal life must certainly have been conducive to an optimistic outlook on life, for as a contemporary writes, "Mr. Millar's virtues were the spontaneous growth of an understanding strong, enlightened, and capacious; of a heart overflowing with benevolence and sensibility... Mr. Millar's temper was uncommonly sanguine. What he wished he always convinced himself was probable; what he dreaded he seldom allowed himself to think could take place. His ingenuity in deceiving himself was sometimes most surprising. The slightest favourable circumstances were so combined as to seem a solid foundation for confidence; the smallest doubt of the truth of unwelcome intelligence was strengthened and corroborated, till it lulled, if it could not entirely overcome, apprehension."<sup>10</sup> He never left the British Isles and made his first trip to London in 1792.

Millar's main work on the subject of primitive societies, The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks; or, An Inquiry into the Circumstances which give Rise to Influence and Authority, in the Different Members of Society, was first published in 1771. In it he condemns many aspects of primitive life, strongly deploring the absence in primitive societies of many of the institutions of civilized Europe, especially those of law and of marriage. In contrast to Ferguson, he praises the commercial spirit of his own society.

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<sup>9</sup> Dugald Stewart, "Account of the Life and Writings of John Millar, Esq.," prefaced to The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks...., 4th ed., (Edinburgh, 1806), p.cxxiv.

<sup>10</sup> Dugald Stewart, "Account of the Life and Writings of John Millar, Esq.," prefaced to The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks...., 4th ed., (Edinburgh, 1806), p.cxx.

The third of these men is William Robertson (1721-1793), born at Borthwick, Midlothian, Edinburgh. He attended Edinburgh University and was licensed to preach by the Dalkeith Presbytery. Upon the death of his parents, he was obliged to support six sisters and a brother. He volunteered for active service against the Jacobites in the '45 and later "organised a moderate party in the Assembly, prepared to co-operate closely with the government of the day and ready to defend lay patronage in the church. Services such as these did not go long unrewarded, particularly as Robertson took care to establish close personal contacts with leading politicians, especially Bute, Gilbert Elliot and Cathcart. A royal chaplaincy, the principalship of the University of Edinburgh, and the office of Historiographer to His Majesty in Scotland were conferred on Robertson in rapid succession."<sup>11</sup> But he also merited considerable praise as an historian by writing his History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and of King James the Sixth (1759), his History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles the Fifth (1769), and his History of America (1777): the research for these works necessitated many trips to the Continent. Like Ferguson he was a member of the Select Society, the Philosophical Society, the Poker Club and, following the publication of his History of America (1777) he was elected to the Royal Academy of Madrid (a Spanish translation of the work was started, but was halted by the Spanish government before it could be completed). It is recorded that Robertson was so dignified in bearing that he "seldom made a joke and never made a blunder."<sup>12</sup> His aloofness made him the target of occasional practical jokes played by enthusiastic friends, which he is said to have accepted with good grace. It is observed that he was never

<sup>11</sup>D.B.Horn, "Principal William Robertson, D.D., Historian," reprinted from the University of Edinburgh Journal (Autumn 1956), p.157.

<sup>12</sup>Dugald Stewart, "Life of Robertson," in H.G.Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, (London, 1901), p.78.

known to have entered the walls of a playhouse, but that he was the first minister in Scotland who kept a carriage. He was deaf and "required an ear-trumpet, but this infirmity was not too great a trial for a man who loved to talk more than to listen."<sup>13</sup>

Robertson's chief work on primitive societies, The History of America, was first published in 1777, and reflects his constant efforts to strike a balance between his admiration for, and disparagement of, primitive people. He weighs the hardships of primitive life against the vices of civilized life, and often confines himself to recording observations regarding the savages.

These three men shared several characteristics. They came from the same social class, spoke in Scots, but wrote in English; they were all Whigs. They were closely connected with the ministry and with university teaching. All three received positions through patronage, and they frequently exchanged ideas with one another. Most germane to this context, they were all interested in primitive societies and in comparing those societies with their own.

Nevertheless, their circumstances, and the formative influences to which each was subject, differed in several significant respects.

Ferguson was born into a rural setting (on the edge of the Highlands), travelled occasionally to the Continent, and was actively involved in military matters. Robertson travelled extensively on the Continent, and enlisted to fight against the Jacobites. Millar, on the other hand, never left Britain and had no contact with war. Ferguson's physical condition suddenly degenerated in his mid-fifties, but he never had to

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<sup>13</sup> Dugald Stewart, "Life of Robertson," in H.G. Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, (London, 1910), p.101.

suffer financial hardships. Millar enjoyed continuous good health and economic security. Robertson, in contrast, gradually became deaf, and was also obliged to shoulder heavy family responsibilities and their inevitable monetary demands (though he succeeded in matching them, and, in fact, became moderately prosperous). Ferguson was noted for his graciousness, and he enjoyed modest fame on the Continent and great respect in Edinburgh. Contemporaries found Millar ingenuous, and ever-optimistic, but he was never particularly well-known. Robertson was conspicuously more reserved, despite his extensive travels, but became famous throughout Europe.

Finally, these differences of character and personal experience form an interesting commentary upon the opinions collated and compared in the following chapters. For example, Ferguson's attitudes toward war and conflict might well have been influenced by his military background. Millar's praise of contemporary legal institutions might reflect both his relatively untroubled personal life and his vested interest, as a Professor of Law, in the stability of legal institutions. And Robertson's particular interest in language might well have been stimulated by his extensive travels on the continent and perhaps by his deafness.



An Essay on the History of Civil Society<sup>1</sup>

I.

Ferguson's Format.

Adam Ferguson's An Essay on the History of Civil Society is divided into six parts in which Ferguson moves from a discussion of the "General Characteristics of Human Nature", through the "History of Rude Nations", "History of Policy and Arts", "Consequences that result from the Advancement of Civil and Commercial Arts", and "Decline of Nations", to an analysis of "Corruption and Political Slavery", - an ordering of topics which, at first glance suggests an increasing pessimism and perhaps despair in the course of the work. In fact the concluding message of Ferguson's work is sternly cautionary. Thus in the format of Part VI, Ferguson moves from an analysis of "Corruption in general", to "Luxury", the "Corruption incident to Polished Nations", "Corruption, as it tends to Political Slavery", and finally to the "Progress and Termination of Despotism"

Yet behind the whole fabric of Ferguson's history lies the deeply optimistic belief that "Human Nature" possesses certain positive, unchanging qualities and potentialities which can lead man from the "State of Nature" - under the influence of "the principles of self-preservation", "Union among Mankind", and "War and Dissension" and by means of his "Intellectual Powers" and his "Moral Sentiment" - to a state both of "Happiness" and of "National Felicity". (This is in fact the organization of Part I, "Of the General Characteristics of Human Nature".) And in the course of his Essay, it is Ferguson's purpose to demonstrate exactly how "Civil Society" has developed under such diverse influences as the establishment of private

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<sup>1</sup>Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society 1767, ed. Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh, 1966) - hereafter cited as Essay.

property, specialization, subordination, and increasing civil union to heights of personal and civic glory, and also to depths of materialistic despotism and personal despair.

The discussion in this chapter, however, will relate only to Ferguson's attitudes toward primitive societies and, inevitably, to his attitudes toward the relationship between those societies and the culture from which he was writing. The chapter will include: a discussion of some of the assumptions and attitudes underlying Ferguson's position as the author of the Essay, and an analysis of some of the principal values which he applies to his description of the general characteristics of human nature and to his description of primitive man. The chapter will close with a discussion of the comparisons made by Ferguson between primitive and polished societies.

#### Author's Purpose.

Ferguson argues that his principal concern in the Essay is with "the character of man, as he now exists" and with "the laws of this animal and intellectual system, on which his happiness depends."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he argues "that general principles relating to this, or any other subject, are useful only so far as they are founded on just observation, and lead to the knowledge of important consequences, or so far as they enable us to act with success when we would apply either the intellectual or the physical powers of nature, to the great purposes of human life."<sup>3</sup>

But he insists with equal vigor that "man may mistake the objects of his pursuit."<sup>4</sup> He points out that "if under a sense of such possible errors, he would find a standard by which to judge of his own proceedings, and arrive at the best state of his nature, he cannot find it perhaps in the practice of any individual, or of any nation whatever;

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<sup>2</sup>Essay, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Essay, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Essay, p. 9.

not even in the sense of the majority, or the prevailing opinion of his kind. He must look for it in the best conceptions of his understanding, in the best movements of his heart; he must thence discover what is the perfection and the happiness of which he is capable."<sup>5</sup>

In other words, he is declaring that his main interest, at least in the case of the Essay, lies in the character of man as it is actually seen to exist. He is also stating that the value he places on the specific facts of this existence goes beyond the mere truthfulness of what he has observed and beyond simple acceptance of the evaluations made by other people. Instead, his evaluations are founded subjectively upon the interpretations of both his own emotions and intellect.

In the course of his Essay, he discusses Montesquieu, as an influence, at greater length and with greater reverence than he discusses any other contemporary author.<sup>6</sup> He observes that the particular value of his own work in relation to Montesquieu's will rest in his ability to address himself to "the comprehension of ordinary capacities, because I am more on the level of ordinary men."<sup>7</sup>

## II.

### Errors Ferguson seeks to Avoid.

Ferguson also refers admiringly to the imagination and invention shown by Rousseau in his Discours sur l'origine de l'inegalite parmi les hommes (1755). But he rejects as absurd such conclusions as "Would tempt us to admit, among the materials of history, the suggestion of fancy, and to receive perhaps, as the model of our nature in its original state, some of the animals whose shape has the greatest resemblance to ours."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Essay, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Essay, p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> Essay, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Essay, p. 5.

Ferguson is here referring to a trend of thought first popularized in Britain by Edward Tyson's discussion (1699) of the "Orang-Outang", (by which he meant chimpanzee).<sup>9</sup> This interest in the animal known to resemble man most closely was alluded to by James Thomson in his poem, Liberty,<sup>10</sup> and the idea was elaborated in its extreme form - that the Orang-outang was actually man in his most primitive condition - by Lord Monboddo in the year 1773.<sup>11</sup> Robertson, too, interested himself in this concept, though he did not in fact accept the theory.<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere, Ferguson warns of the dangers of selective bias in choosing "one or a few particulars on which to establish a theory", for "in framing our account of what man was in some imaginary state of nature, we overlook what he has always appeared within the reach of our own observation, and in the records of history."<sup>13</sup>

Not only is Ferguson concerned with the tendency to overlook factual observation, but he also warns against "a fond expectation, perhaps, that we may be able to penetrate the secrets of nature, to the very source of existence", an error which has "led to many fruitless inquiries and given rise to many wild suppositions."<sup>14</sup> He explains that without a basis in fact, speculation is useless, particularly with reference to the primeval history of man.<sup>15</sup> And he points out that not only is man by his reason unable to discover the origins of human society, but that these origins themselves are not the result of rational processes. Instead, the forms of society, "like the winds, that come we know not whence, and blow whithersoever they list.... are derived from an obscure and distant origin; they arise,

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<sup>9</sup> A.O. Lovejoy, "Monboddo and Rousseau," in Essays in the History of Ideas, ed. A.O. Lovejoy, 1955, p.47.

<sup>10</sup> James Thomson, Liberty, V, 676-684 (London, 1735), p.37.

<sup>11</sup> Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, (Baltimore, 1934), p.282.

<sup>12</sup> Chauncy B. Tinker, Nature's Simple Plan, (Princeton, 1922), p.14

<sup>13</sup> Essay, p.2, 14 Essay, p.2. <sup>15</sup> Essay, p.6.

long before the date of philosophy, from the instincts, not from the speculations, of men."<sup>16</sup>

Macpherson, too, believed that human speculation regarding the past must be confined to probabilities, when he stated that "inquiries into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind. The ingenious may form systems of history on probabilities and a few facts; but at a great distance of time, their accounts must be vague and uncertain..."<sup>17</sup> Blair, also, posited that "what degrees of friendship, love, and heroism may possibly be found to prevail in a rude state of society, no one can say."<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, in another work, Ferguson went on to suggest the problem of ethnocentricity: "the diversities of manners arising from difference of choice or interpretation, render it difficult to judge of the merits or personal qualities of men, in ages or nations remote from each other... There is in fact nothing in external manners which opinion may not render agreeable or disagreeable; and the opinion of one country is not the rule or standard by which to judge of the manners of another."<sup>19</sup>  
Progress.

Related to Ferguson's beliefs that the origins of civil society are necessarily obscure, are his ideas concerning man's ability to observe the phenomena of progress. For although Ferguson assumes that such phenomena exist, he argues that they are largely independent of the mass will of mankind. He states that "every step and every movement of the multitude, even in what are termed enlightened ages, are made with equal blindness to the future; and nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution

<sup>16</sup> Essay, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> James Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems, of Ossian the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), p. i.

<sup>18</sup> Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems, p. 13-14.

<sup>19</sup> Adam Ferguson, Institutes of Moral Philosophy (Edinburgh, 1769), pp. 184-185.



of any human design."<sup>20</sup>

He further argues that the course of progress develops continuously and that the stages cannot be easily delimited, when he writes that "the steps which lead to progress are many; and we are at a loss on whom to bestow the greatest share of our praise; on the first or on the last who may have bore a part in the progress."<sup>21</sup>

In addition, he feels it important to stress that it is impossible for man to quit "the state of his nature" or to occupy a station unintended for him, "while, like other animals, he only follows the disposition, and employs the powers that nature has given."<sup>22</sup> Finally, in this connection, rather than viewing progress as a force, potentially leading man into a state which might be considered unnatural, Ferguson believes that the forces of progress reveal the hand of the Lord. Carrying this further, he argues that the "physical powers employed in succession, and combined to a salutary purpose, constitute those very proofs of design from which we infer the existence of God..."<sup>23</sup>

#### The Importance of Studying Mankind in Groups.

In discussing the phenomena of the progress of man, Ferguson is always speaking of mankind taken in groups, "as they have always subsisted. The history of the individual is but a detail of the sentiments and thoughts he has entertained in view of his species; and every experiment relative to this subject should be made with entire societies, not with single men."<sup>24</sup> And at another time, he refers to Montesquieu as also sustaining this opinion.<sup>25</sup> He argues that "a wild man therefore, caught in the woods, where he had always lived apart from his species, is a singular instance, not a specimen of any general character!"<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Essay, p.122.

<sup>21</sup>Essay, p.170.

<sup>22</sup>Essay, p.170.

<sup>23</sup>Essay, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup>Essay, p.4.

<sup>25</sup>Essay, p.16.

<sup>26</sup>Essay, p.3.

Incidentally, Ferguson is here again arguing against an interest increasingly prevalent during the eighteenth century, which has been entertainingly documented by C.B.Tinker in his book, Nature's Simple Plan.<sup>27</sup>

Priorities of Consideration.

An examination of Ferguson's purpose in writing his Essay, reveals his belief that man's present aspirations are more important than his past history. He asserts that "whatever may have been the original state of our species, it is of more importance to know the condition to which we ourselves should aspire, than that which our ancestors may be supposed to have left."<sup>29</sup> He is also able to make the detached and ironically philosophical point that "nature proceeds in her course, whilst the curious are busied in the search of her principles," and "the felicity of our conduct is more owing to the talent we possess for detail, and to the suggestion of particular occasions than it is to any direction we can find in theory and general speculations."<sup>30</sup> According to this line of thought, he observes a priority in attending "to the universal qualities of our nature, before we regard its varieties, or attempt to explain differences consisting in the unequal possession or application of dispositions and powers that are in some measure common to all mankind."<sup>31</sup>

Of still greater importance to Ferguson's thinking, however, is his discussion of the different types of progress which are possible. For it is his rejection of the belief that economic advance is the most important form of progress which, in many ways, sets him apart from most of the other eighteenth-

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<sup>27</sup> Chauncy B. Tinker, Nature's Simple Plan (Princeton, 1922).

<sup>29</sup> Essay, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Essay, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Essay, p. 10.

century writers. In Ferguson's own words, "where both the promptitude of the head and the ardour and sensibility of the heart are united, they constitute that superiority of mind, the frequency of which among men, in particular ages and nations, much more than the progress they have made in speculation, or in the practice of mechanic and liberal arts, should determine the rate of their genius, and assign the palm of distinction and honour."<sup>32</sup>

Blair, for example, was far closer to Ferguson on this issue than many other writers (principally Millar and Robertson) in agreeing that primitive conditions and generous sentiments are not inconsistent with each other. However, he asserted that generous sentiments are not inconsistent with barbarity whereas Ferguson held, that primitive conditions are not inconsistent with a refinement of moral values.<sup>33</sup> Other writers like Macpherson, were content merely to observe that "if we err in praising too much the times of our forefathers, it is also as repugnant to good sense, to be altogether blind to the imperfections of our own. If our fathers had not so much wealth, they had certainly fewer vices than the present age. Their tables, it is true, were not so well provided neither were their beds so soft as those of modern times; and this, in the eyes of men who place their ultimate happiness in those conveniences of life, gives us a great advantage over them."<sup>34</sup>

Ferguson also points out that the mere accumulation of knowledge does not make a culture more worthy of esteem; "the Romans were more knowing than the Greeks; and every scholar of Modern Europe is, in this sense, more learned than the most accomplished person that ever bore either of those celebrated names. But is he on that account their

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<sup>32</sup>Essay, p.29.

<sup>33</sup>Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal," prefaced to Ossian's Poems, (London, 1763), p.13.

<sup>34</sup>James Macpherson, "A Dissertation concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), second and third pages.



superior?"<sup>35</sup> Related to this point is William Duff's observation, also appearing in 1767, that "the want [of learning and Critical Knowledge] is "one of the principal causes of this art's [Original Poetry] being carried to its highest perfection in the first uncultivated periods of human society."<sup>36</sup> However, Duff's statement is merely an example of an interest, already prevalent in the eighteenth century, which received considerable impetus from the appearance of Macpherson's *Ossian* in 1760.

Ferguson, however, goes further in his analysis of Greece and Rome when he points out the motif, later to appear in Hume's *Dialogues*,<sup>37</sup> that those celebrated nations are indebted, for a great part of their estimation, not to the matter of their history, but to the manner in which it has been delivered, and to the capacity of their historians, and other writers. Their story has been told by men who knew how to draw our attention on the proceedings of the understanding and of the heart, more than on the detail of facts; and who could exhibit characters to be admired and loved, in the midst of actions which we should now universally hate or condemn."<sup>38</sup> Blair, too, echoes a similar thought in the corollary that "what is much more valuable than the history of such transactions as a rude age can afford," is "the history of human imagination and passion."<sup>39</sup> Justice and Happiness.

If these are then the values which Ferguson wishes to see operating within his own field of concerns, and within the structure of thought in the Essay - values he applies to himself -, it would now seem appropriate to examine more closely the manner in which he wishes to see these values extended throughout civil society.

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<sup>35</sup> Essay, p.29.

<sup>36</sup> William Duff, *An Essay on original genius*. p. 274, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations", in *ELH* 12 (1945), pp.203-220.

<sup>37</sup> Duncan Forbes, ed. Essay, p.XXX.

<sup>38</sup> Essay, p.194.

<sup>39</sup> Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the son of Fingal" prefaced to Ossian's Poems, (London, 1763), p.1.

In pointing out that the evaluation of attitudes is not necessarily equivalent to the evaluation of actions, and that moral maturity cannot properly be equated with greater knowledge, Ferguson implies that the history of civil society can not satisfactorily be evaluated in terms of the existence of complex institutions or of a large body of accumulated knowledge. He suggests as an alternative, that "the employing of force, only for the obtaining of justice, and for the preservation of national rights... is, perhaps, the principal characteristic on which, among modern nations, we bestow the epithets of civilized or of polished."<sup>40</sup> He observes elsewhere that Montesquieu, as well as Epictetus, held "an idea of justice, which," as Montesquieu said, "if I could follow in every instance, I should think myself the most happy of men."<sup>41</sup> Ferguson emphasizes a further point, by referring to the Greeks, though from an opposite perspective, when he states that the use of force for justice only "did not accompany the progress of arts among the Greeks, nor keep pace with the advancement of policy, literature, and philosophy. It did not await the returns of learning and politeness among the moderns..."<sup>42</sup> Thus, again, he is observing that there are many types of progress, that the existence of one type of progress cannot be inferred from the appearance of another type of progress, and that a type of internal spirit is of greater value than a type of external accomplishment. Specifically, he is here arguing that there is no necessary causal relationship between the principle of force-only-for-justice and the progress of arts (skills), policy, literature, philosophy, learning, and politeness, and that the advancement of this principle in civil society is a value different from, and at least equal to, the

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<sup>40</sup> Essay, p.200.

<sup>41</sup> Essay, p.39.

<sup>42</sup> Essay, p.200.

other values he specifies.

In citing Montesquieu, Ferguson implies that he, too, values justice because he values happiness, "a happiness which is to be found only in qualities of the heart."<sup>43</sup> He stoically warns that "we think ourselves dependent on accidents; and are therefore kept in suspense and solicitude; we think ourselves dependent on the will of other men; and are therefore servile and timid; we think our felicity is placed in subjects for which our fellow-creatures are rivals and competitors; and in pursuit of happiness, we engage in those scenes of emulation, envy, hatred, animosity, and revenge, that lead to the highest pitch of distress. We act, in short, as if to preserve ourselves were to retain our weakness, and perpetuate our sufferings."<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Ferguson is able to relate this personal concern to civil society when he remarks that "there have certainly been very few examples of states, who have, by arts or policy, improved the original dispositions of human nature, or endeavoured, by wise and effectual precautions, to prevent its corruption."<sup>45</sup> However, with regard to the development of the Roman Empire, he also observes that "if there be a refinement in affirming that... happiness is not to be measured by the contrary enjoyments, it is a refinement which was made by Regulus and Cincinnatus before the date of philosophy."<sup>46</sup> Thus by considering man's social history, Ferguson emphasizes again the many different forms of progress. Here he develops his idea that an important aspect of the refinement of a society is to be seen in the ability of a man standing within that society to realize certain potential aspects of the general character of mankind - specifically, in this instance, a man's ability to affirm that "happiness is not to be measured by contrary enjoyments."

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<sup>43</sup> Essay, p.52.

<sup>44</sup> Essay, p.52.

<sup>45</sup> Essay, p.205.

<sup>46</sup> Essay, p.46.

Happiness is thus seen by Ferguson to consist in a form of self-realization, and he remarks almost proverbially, "Withdraw the occupations of men, terminate their desires, existence is a burden and the iteration of memory is a torment."<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, he observes that this self-realization is most animated during "calls to danger and hardship, not invitations to safety and ease..."<sup>48</sup> Yet self-realization is also to be found in a man's affection for other people. This he asserts by citing Pope:

"Man, like the generous vine, supported lives;

The strength he gains, is from th' embrace he gives."

and by commenting that "the same maxim will apply throughout every part of nature. To love, is to enjoy pleasure; To hate, is to be in pain."<sup>49</sup> He warns elsewhere that "it is an unhappy opinion,

that beneficence is an effort of self-denial, or that we lay our fellow-creatures under great obligations by the kindness we do them."<sup>50</sup> And by bearing in mind these two forms of self-

realization, "affection", and "force of mind," he concludes that together they are "the bond and the strength of communities," and "were the inspiration of God, and original attributes in the nature of man."<sup>51</sup>

#### The Public Good.

In considering Ferguson's discussions concerning the happiness of the individual, it is important to recall his determination to study the individual only insofar as he was found to be a member of society. This determination is based on the premise that "man is, by nature, the member of a community," from which, Ferguson also argues that "when considered in this capacity, the individual appears to be no longer made for himself. He must forego his happiness and freedom where these interfere with the good of society. He

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<sup>47</sup> Essay, p.43.

<sup>48</sup> Essay, p.45.

<sup>49</sup> Essay, p.54.

<sup>50</sup> Adam Ferguson, Institutes of Moral Philosophy (Edinburgh, 1769), p.167.

<sup>51</sup> Essay, p.205.

is only part of a whole; and the praise we think due to his virtue, is but a branch of that more general commendation we bestow on the member of a body, on the part of a fabric or engine, for being well fitted to occupy its place, and to produce its effect."<sup>52</sup> Ferguson thus argues that "it would seem... to be the happiness of man, to make his social dispositions the ruling spring of his occupations; to state himself as the member of a community, for whose general good his heart may glow with an ardent zeal, to the suppression of those personal cares which are the foundation of painful anxieties, fear, jealousy, and envy."<sup>53</sup> And with great self-awareness, he urges that "to act in the view of his fellow-creatures, to produce his mind in public, to give it all the exercise of sentiment and thought, which pertain to man as a member of society, as a friend, or an enemy seems to be the principal calling and occupation of his nature."<sup>54</sup>

Pre-eminent among the great many eighteenth-century Scottish writers concerned with the problems of the individual's relationship to society, was Adam Smith. But we might also mention the poet, Thomson, who had written in 1735:

"Tho' VIRTUE not disdains Appeals to Self...  
 An active Flood of universal Love  
 Must swell the Breast...  
 This moral Gravitation, rushing prone  
 To press the public Good..."<sup>55</sup>

Ferguson feels that the public good is best served by the division of government which does not "crowd, under one establishment, numbers of men who may serve to constitute several;" or which does not "commit affairs to the conduct of one senate, one legislative or executive power, which, upon a distinct and separate footing, might furnish an exercise of ability, and a theatre of glory, to many."<sup>56</sup> Using the two great classical

<sup>52</sup> Essay, pp. 57-58.

<sup>53</sup> Essay, p.54.

<sup>54</sup> Essay, p.29.

<sup>55</sup> James Thomson, Liberty, V, 237-258 (London, 1735), p.17.

<sup>56</sup> Essay, p.60.



civilizations again to reinforce his arguments, Ferguson points out that "to the ancient Greek, or the Roman, the individual was nothing, and the public everything." Whereas in the modern state, "in too many nations of Europe, the individual is everything, and the public nothing."<sup>57</sup>

Opposed to Wealth, Property, Interest, and Social Rank.

The stress Ferguson places upon human affection, force of mind, justice, happiness, and the public good, as he interprets them, lead him to oppose values which other eighteenth-century Scottish writers accept axiomatically as the prime values underlying civil society. For Ferguson points out that "the object in commerce is to make the individual rich"<sup>59</sup> in order to make his country wealthy, but that personal wealth may lead the individual to "refer the use of every subject to himself; he may employ the materials of generosity to feed a personal vanity, or to indulge a sickly and effeminate fancy, which has learned to enumerate the trappings of weakness or folly among the necessities of life."<sup>60</sup> And thus, neither commerce, nor wealth, nor private property should be accepted as being of value without qualification.

Similarly, he observes that "in every commercial state, notwithstanding any pretension to equal rights, the exaltation of a few must depress the many."<sup>61</sup> And it hurts him deeply that "we judge of entire nations by the productions of a few mechanical arts, and think we are talking of men, while we are boasting of their dress, and their palaces. The sense in which we apply the terms, great, and noble, high rank and high life, show, that we have, on such occasions, transferred the idea of perfection from the character to the equipage; and that excellence itself is, in our esteem, a mere pageant, adorned at a great expense by the labours of many workmen."<sup>62</sup> Incidentally, Ferguson's use of linguistic analysis to support a point was employed by a great many other eighteenth-century writers in their discussions

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57 Essay, p.56.

58 Essay, p.110.

59 Essay, p.144.

60 Essay, p.252.

61 Essay, p.186.

62 Essay, pp. 252-253.

of primitive societies and will be dealt with at greater length within the chapter on Robertson.

Ferguson also points out, in his Institutes of Moral Philosophy, that "interest", which is "the concern men take in . . . food, accommodation, and cloaths", and "a principal article" of which is "property in land, money, or effects" because it "secures the possession of such things" - that interest "engages men in competitions and stifles affection;" and furthermore that it "exposes them to anxiety, jealousy, and envy."<sup>63</sup>

Against Contemporary Materialism.

Not only does Ferguson oppose wealth, property, interest, and social rank, when viewed in the abstract as unqualified benefits, he also condemns his materialistic society which appears to encourage the acceptance of such beliefs. He protests that "we hazard being treated with ridicule, when we require political establishments, merely to cultivate the talents of men, and to inspire the sentiments of a liberal mind; we must offer some motive of interest, or some hopes of external advantage, to animate the pursuits, or to direct the measures... of ordinary men."<sup>64</sup> He argues further that "we live in societies, where men must be rich, in order to be great; where pleasure itself is often pursued from vanity; where the desire of a supposed happiness serves to inflame the worst of passions, and is itself the foundation of misery; where public justice, like fetters applied to the body, may, without inspiring the sentiments of candour and equity, prevent the actual commission of crimes."<sup>65</sup> So it is that the ordinary man "apprehends a relation between his person and his property, which renders what he calls his own in a manner a part of himself, a constituent of his rank, his condition, his character, in which independent of any personal merit, he may be an object of consideration or neglect; and in

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<sup>63</sup> Adam Ferguson, Institutes of Moral Philosophy (Edinburgh, 1769), p.99.

<sup>64</sup> Essay, p.137.

<sup>65</sup> Essay, pp.161-162.

which he may be wounded and injured, while his person is safe, and every want of his nature completely supplied."<sup>66</sup>

The identification of material prosperity and the unequal distribution of wealth with personal happiness - against which Ferguson is protesting - is evinced in the writing of many eighteenth-century Scots. For example, in Allan Ramsay's The Gentle Shepherd, Sir William Worthy's son, Patie, is shown to acquire a form of moral perfection among his flocks which could not have been attained had he been brought up within a more sophisticated society; yet it is necessary for him to return to that society in order to receive a final polishing and, in effect, to legitimize his moral perfection.<sup>67</sup> But the confusion is not limited to poets. For example, John Gregory argues that "we will readily acknowledge, that in a very advanced and polished state of society human Nature appears in many respects to great advantage... It is true, that these improvements are often so perverted, that they bring no accession of happiness to Mankind."<sup>68</sup> He implies that human nature may improve without men becoming any happier as a result. For although by human nature he might mean something other than a man's inner character, it is he who associates that "nature" with happiness.

Ferguson's vision of his own contemporary society becomes even more grim, however, when he considers it from the perspective of an American savage, just as before he approached ancient Greece from a contemporary viewpoint in order to point out its weaknesses. Robertson, too, attacks his own and earlier cultures from time to time by shifting perspectives, but in his case the procedure would appear to be unconscious rather than a carefully employed technique. Ferguson's

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<sup>66</sup>Essay, p.12.

<sup>67</sup>Allan Ramsay, The Gentle Shepherd, (Edinburgh, 1880).

<sup>68</sup>John Gregory, Comparative View, xiii-xv, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists: Some Reconsiderations," in ELH, 12 (1945), P.209.



savage considers merchants as "a kind of neutral persons, who took no part in the quarrels of their country;" and Ferguson proceeds to comment that the savage did not know how much war itself may be made a subject of traffic; what mighty armies may be put in motion from behind the counter; how often human blood is, without any rational animosity, bought and sold for bills of exchange; and how often the prince, the nobles and the statesmen, in many a polished nation, might, in his account, be considered merchants."<sup>69</sup> And he relativistically associates his own people's prehistoric society with that of the contemporary American Indian - contrasting the two primitive societies with his own culture - when he declares poignantly that "if ever... any American tribe escape the poison which is administered by our traders of Europe, it may be from the relations of the present times, and the descriptions which are now given by travellers, that such a people, in after ages, may best collect the accounts of their present condition,"<sup>70</sup> just as the Romans recorded conditions in ancient Britain.

### III.

#### Man's Unchanging Qualities.

We have examined several of the principal values which Ferguson believes an individual must discover for himself by searching his own intellect and emotions. And we have seen how Ferguson elaborates upon these values and priorities, first in the light of his own work, and then as they were more generally extended. It is now time to observe some of the ways in which they are applied to his descriptions of some of the general characteristics he observed in human nature.

Despite Ferguson's very real distress at the thought of individuals being treated as objects - a brutal pattern enforced, he felt, by his own society - he is equally aware,

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<sup>69</sup> Essay, p.150.

<sup>70</sup> Essay, p.80.

as we have discussed, of a productive, benevolent potential within man's character, which he is also able to observe at work in the society about him. It is the tension between these two clearly contrasting and unreconciled observations which produces such pathos when he pleads, "What must we think of the force of the disposition of compassion, to candour, and goodwill, which, notwithstanding the prevailing opinion that the happiness of a man consists in possessing the greatest possible share of riches, preferments, and honours, still keeps the parties who are in competition for those objects, on a tolerable footing of amity, and leads them to abstain even from their own supposed good when their seizing it appears in the light of a detriment to others?"<sup>71</sup>

And in addition to "goodwill", Ferguson argues that "art is natural to man; and ... the skill he acquires after many ages of practice, is only the improvement of a talent he possessed at the first."<sup>72</sup> For it is only by way of such assumptions that Ferguson is able to support his contention that man should look for a standard of values within his own heart and understanding.

#### Determinism.

Yet Ferguson is also careful to examine the extent to which man's character is environmentally determined, perhaps because it was a subject frequently discussed by other eighteenth-century Scottish writers, or perhaps because Montesquieu devoted a large section of his Spirit of the Laws to a discussion of the effects of climate. But unlike Montesquieu, Ferguson argues that "we are still unable to explain the manner in which climate may affect the temperament, or foster the genius, of its inhabitant."<sup>73</sup> However, it is of interest to note his statement in The Institutes of Moral Philosophy, that "the animal and rational temperament of mankind, is comparatively phlegmatic and

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<sup>71</sup> Essay, p.35.

<sup>72</sup> Essay, p.167.

<sup>73</sup> Essay, p.117.

dull in cold climates; is more ardent and quick in warm climates; but has always possessed a distinguished superiority in the temperate."<sup>74</sup>

Ferguson takes a similar stand regarding the subject of physiological determinism. Following his argument, that man's "mixed disposition to friendship or enmity, his reason, his use of language and articulate sounds, like the shape and the erect position of his body, are to be considered as so many attributes of his nature,"<sup>75</sup> it is then natural to suppose "that the temper of the heart, and the intellectual operations of the mind, are, in some measure, dependent on the state of the animal organs..."<sup>76</sup> He maintains, however, that "we can never hope to explain the manner of those influences till we have understood what probably we shall never understand, the structure of those finer organs with which the operations of the soul are connected."<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, he uses his belief in the unchanging structure of man's physical body throughout the ages, with which he associates man's personality, as an argument for the consistency of man's "mode of existence, ... dispositions and manner of life."<sup>78</sup> For as has been shown, the belief in this constancy was fundamental to the rest of Ferguson's thinking, and it was therefore important to him that it be defended.

But Ferguson had also to account for the striking dissimilarities which occurred between men of different periods and cultures, and between different individuals. He achieves this by arguing that "the seeds of every form are lodged in human nature; they spring up and ripen with the season. The prevalence of a particular species is often derived from an imperceptible ingredient mingled in the soil."<sup>79</sup> Thus it is that "under all his corruptions or improvements, he retains his

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<sup>74</sup>Adam Ferguson, Institutes of Moral Philosophy (Edinburgh, 1769), p.17.

<sup>75</sup>Essay, p.3.

<sup>76</sup>Essay, p.118.

<sup>77</sup>Essay, p.118.

<sup>78</sup>Essay, p.4.

<sup>79</sup>Essay, p.123.

natural sensibility, if not his force,"<sup>80</sup> thus Ferguson can argue that although "the occupations of men, in every condition, bespeak their freedom of choice, their various opinions, and the multiplicity of wants by which they are urged", even so, "they enjoy, or endure, with a sensibility, or a phlegm, which are nearly the same in every situation."<sup>81</sup>

On the basis of these assumptions, Ferguson develops an argument on the nature of free will. He indicates that "man, like the other animals, has certain instinctive propensities, which, prior to the perception of pleasure or pain, and prior to the experience of what is pernicious or useful, lead him to perform many functions of nature... He is, withal, in a very high degree susceptible of habits; and can, by forbearance or exercise, so far weaken, confirm, or even diversify his talents, and his dispositions, as to appear, in a great measure, the arbiter of his own rank in nature, and the author of all the varieties which are exhibited in the actual history of his species."<sup>82</sup> And it is as a result of the action of this free will that "in one state of society, arts are slighted, from that very ardour of mind, and principle of activity, by which, in another, they are practiced with the greatest success."<sup>83</sup>

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Needless to say, Ferguson must support a concept of freedom of choice, or there would be no meaning to the idea that man must search for standards of value within himself. There would be no purpose in Ferguson's underlying system of evaluative procedure.

#### The Effects of Free Will.

Ferguson's discussion of man's freedom of choice can be seen to support a definition of 'cultivated' based on the productiveness of man's talents. He states that "a people

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<sup>80</sup> Essay, p.112.

<sup>81</sup> Essay, p.7.

<sup>82</sup> Essay, p.11.

<sup>83</sup> Essay, p.109.

are cultivated or unimproved in their talents, in proportion as those talents are employed in the practice of arts [= skills] and in the affairs of society: they are improved or corrupted in their manners, in proportion as they are encouraged and directed to act on the maxims of freedom and justice, or as they are degraded into a state of meanness and servitude."<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, he argues that this freedom of choice is motivated by "an elevation natural to man, by which he would be thought, in his rudest state, however urged by necessity, to rise above the consideration of mere subsistence, and the regards of interest: He would appear to act only from the heart, in its engagements of friendship, or opposition; he would show himself only upon occasions of danger or difficulty, and leave ordinary cares to the weak or the servile."<sup>85</sup> Thus

it is that the members of a community form images of their desired modes of existence. Ferguson argues that the health of the community depends on the success of its members in living up to the images which they have set for themselves. As Ferguson points out, "while arts improve, and riches increase; while the possessions of individuals, or their prospects of gain, come up to their opinion of what is required to settle a family, they enter on its cares with alacrity. But when the possession, however redundant, falls short of the standard, and a fortune supposed sufficient for marriage is attained with difficulty, population is checked, or begins to decline."<sup>86</sup> For this reason, we may infer that

individuals will be less happy when their self-images depend on their attaining states which in turn depend upon forces independent of their own wills. This idea further reinforces the argument that man's standard of values must rest within himself. And in his Institutes of Moral Philosophy, Ferguson

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<sup>84</sup> Essay, p.136.

<sup>85</sup> Essay, p.184.

<sup>86</sup> Essay, p.142.



draws the corollary that "these admirations and fears [of equipage, dress, fortune, station, and name] are a symptom, that personal qualities are neglected, and that men are degenerated."<sup>87</sup>

Merited Inequalities.

As we have seen, Ferguson's discussion and evaluation of some of the general characteristics he observes in human nature, indicate that the potential qualities of character within a man are realized in different ways under the influences of various physiological, climatic, and cultural conditions and are dependent upon man's exercise of his free will. Thus it is that "in every society there is a casual subordination, independent of its formal establishment."<sup>88</sup> But within this subordination of the weak to the strong, "prior to the establishment of property, and the distinction of ranks, men have a right to defend their persons, and to act with freedom; they have a right to maintain the apprehensions of reason, and the feelings of the heart; and they cannot for a moment converse with one another, without feeling that the part they maintain may be just or unjust."<sup>89</sup> These are subordinations and rights which depend on the character of a man, however that character may have been influenced, and they exist independently of external appearances.

Just as Ferguson censures only those inequalities that do not arise from individual character, he does not regard human competition per se as evil, for he states that "he who has never struggled with his fellow-creatures, is a stranger to half the sentiments of mankind."<sup>90</sup> He observes, by way of clarification, that "from a regard to the welfare of our fellow-creatures, we endeavour to pacify their animosities, and unite them by the ties of affection. In the pursuit of this amiable intention, we may hope, in some instances, to

<sup>87</sup> Adam Ferguson, Institutes of Moral Philosophy (Edinburgh, 1769),

<sup>88</sup> p.40.  
Essay, p.133.

<sup>89</sup> Essay, pp.34-35.

<sup>90</sup> Essay, p.24.

disarm the angry passions of jealousy and envy; we may hope to instil into the breasts of private men sentiments of candour toward their fellow-creatures, and a disposition to humanity and justice. But it is vain to expect that we can give to the multitude of a people a sense of union among themselves, without admitting hostility to those who oppose them."<sup>91</sup> And he concludes sadly that "could we at once, in the case of any nation, extinguish the emulation which is excited from abroad, we should probably break or weaken the bands of society at home, and close the busiest scenes of national occupations and virtues."<sup>92</sup>

#### Deficiencies of Primitive Societies.

As we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Ferguson's purpose in writing his Essay is to discuss man's character and the laws operating upon it with reference to the history of civil society. But his intention is less to recount fact than to vindicate a system of moral principles on the basis of that history. He declares that his system, in reality, is founded upon values sought within his own heart and mind, not upon values derived from external observations - a procedure he recommends to his public. Furthermore, these values when acted upon, are intended to help man fulfill his potential as a social animal and thus to make him happy.

We quoted Ferguson as stating that "whatever may have been the original state of our species, it is of more importance to know the condition to which we ourselves should aspire, than that which our ancestors may be supposed to have left."<sup>93</sup> And it is always with a view toward discovering that condition that Ferguson examines primitive societies.

Ferguson is not blinded by this purpose, however, from observing the less attractive exigencies of the primitive condition. He casually refers to the state of the savage as

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<sup>91</sup> Essay, p.25.

<sup>92</sup> Essay, p.25.

<sup>93</sup> Essay, p.10.

one of perishing "for want,"<sup>94</sup> a condition which would hardly allow him to fulfill happily his potential as a social animal. He also discusses the inadequacy a savage must feel from the necessity of personally relieving so many diverse needs without having time to acquire any great skill in relieving even one of them.<sup>95</sup> And he observes that this dissatisfaction leads both to sloth<sup>96</sup> and perhaps also to greater violence of appetite and debauch, which "are more flagrant, and more violent, perhaps, in rude ages, than they are in the later periods of commerce and luxury..."<sup>97</sup>

He also notes that "mankind in very early ages of society, learn to covet riches, and to admire distinction",<sup>98</sup> and he concludes that the savage and the barbarian (a distinction he bases on the latter's possession of property by individuals) "have, in more instances, fallen into that species of corruption which we have already described in treating of barbarous nations; they have made rapine their trade, not merely as a species of warfare, or with a view to enrich their community, but to possess, in property, what they learned to prefer even to the ties of affection or of blood."<sup>99</sup>

Ferguson attempts to fit these observations into the context of his thought on determinism by remarking that these disadvantages may be caused by a physiological influence on character. He alleges that a "great part of Africa has been always unknown; but the silence of fame, on the subject of its revolutions is an argument, where no other proof can be found, of weakness in the genius of its people";<sup>100</sup> that these disadvantages may be climatically derived, when he states that "we must here bid farewell to those regions of the earth, on which our species, by the effects of situation and climate, appear to be restrained in their national

<sup>94</sup> Essay, p.142.

<sup>95</sup> Essay, p.180.

<sup>96</sup> Essay, p.180.

<sup>97</sup> Essay, p.260.

<sup>98</sup> Essay, p.125.

<sup>99</sup> Essay, p.242.

<sup>100</sup> Essay, p.110.



pursuits, or inferior in the powers of the mind,"<sup>101</sup> or that they might be caused by a failure to utilize the force of a free will, when he observes that "the savage, and the barbarian, have given... in the case of entire nations, some examples of a weak and timorous character."<sup>102</sup>

Absence of Wealth and Social Rank.

We have pointed out that Ferguson's interest in primitive societies lies not so much in accounting for the observed facts of primitive existence, as in employing certain primitive characteristics to support his conception of value and the nature of man. Thus, although he is prepared to admit that certain aspects of primitive societies tend to prevent the individual from fulfilling his potential as a social animal, accounting for this fact in terms of physiological and climatic determinants and in terms of a misuse of the potential of man's free will, his main concern lies in discussing the aspects of primitive society which support his conception of human nature and what the potential happiness of man might truly be.

In this regard, he points out man's potential magnanimity when property is not valued as a thing in itself. He states that "in a more rude state of the arts, although wealth be unequally divided, the opulent can amass only the simple means of subsistence.. their personal distinctions are taken from their liberality, and supposed elevation of mind. In this manner, the possession of riches serves only to make the owner assume a character of magnanimity, to become the guardian of numbers, or the public object of respect and affection."<sup>103</sup>

Macpherson, too, was arguing a similar point of view when he wrote that "the general poverty of a nation has not the same influence, that the indigence of individuals, in an opulent country, has, upon the manners of the community. The idea of meanness, which is now connected with a narrow

<sup>101</sup> Essay, p.121.

<sup>102</sup> Essay, p.242.

<sup>103</sup> Essay, pp.251-252.

fortune, had its rise after commerce had thrown too much property into the hands of a few; for the poorer sort, imitating the vices of the rich, were obliged to have recourse to roguery and circumvention, in order to supply their extravagance, so that they were, not without reason, reckoned, in more than one sense, the worst people."<sup>104</sup>

Ferguson also uses his discussions of primitive society to demonstrate man's potential for developing his inward sentiments when outward distinctions of social rank are disregarded. It is his impression that "in rude ages [which he equated with primitive societies] men are not separated by distinctions of rank or profession. They live in one manner and speak in one dialect."<sup>105</sup> The savage "knows no superior, and cannot be servile; he knows no distinctions of fortune, and cannot be envious; he acts from his talents in the highest station which human society can offer, that of the counsellor and the soldier of his country. Toward forming his sentiments, he knows all that the heart requires to be known; he can distinguish the friend whom he loves, and the public interest which awakens his zeal."<sup>106</sup> In the case of the savage chieftain, Ferguson observes that "he assumes the distinction of titles, equipage, and dress; he devises regular systems of government and a complicated body of laws: or, naked in the woods, has no badge of superiority but the strength of his limbs and the sagacity of his mind; no rule of conduct but choice; no tie with his fellow-creatures but affection, the love of company, and the desire of safety."<sup>107</sup> Thus, Ferguson believes that primitive man is familiar with natural distinctions of rank. However, leadership is necessarily and entirely based on personal merit in primitive societies in contrast to civilized societies. It is in this sense that the savage may be seen to know "no superior."

<sup>104</sup> James Macpherson, "A Dissertation concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal." in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763) third page.

<sup>105</sup> Essay, p.174.

<sup>106</sup> Essay, p.186.

<sup>107</sup> Essay, pp.7-8.

Moreover, Ferguson argues that primitive ignorance of less primitive vices protects the savage from "an admiration of wealth unpossessed, becoming a principle of envy, or of servility; a habit of acting perpetually with a view to profit, and under a sense of subjection."<sup>108</sup> And he states that these vices "are examples, not of ignorance, but of corruption and baseness."<sup>109</sup> He demonstrates, as we have shown earlier in the context of his more general thought, that this ignorance of more sophisticated vices bestows upon the savage a pronounced clarity of vision when the savage is made to view certain problems of a more sophisticated society.<sup>110</sup> It is in fact the savage's very ignorance of certain forms of decorum which enables him to enjoy greater freedom of self-expression. According to Ferguson, the savage "needs not be told by the critic, to recollect what another would have thought, or in what manner another would have expressed his conception. The simple passions, friendship, resentment, and love, are the movements of his own mind, and he has no occasion to copy."<sup>111</sup> Thus, he acknowledges and quotes Rousseau in declaring, "It is in the least favourable situations... that ~~the~~ arts have flourished the most..."<sup>112</sup>

## IV.

Similarities between Primitive and Polished Societies.

Ferguson's desire "to know the condition to which we ourselves should aspire,"<sup>113</sup> leads him to make many comparisons between primitive and polished societies. These comparisons are based on his conception that all primitive societies are remarkably similar, and that the similarities between separate sophisticated societies are of a much higher order than their dissimilarities. He states that "mankind, when in their rude state, have a great uniformity of manners; but when civilized,

<sup>108</sup> Essay, p.186.

<sup>109</sup> Essay, p.186.

<sup>110</sup> Essay, p.150.

<sup>111</sup> Essay, p.173.

<sup>112</sup> Essay, p.118.

<sup>113</sup> Essay, p.10.

they are engaged in a variety of pursuits; they tread on a larger field and separate to a greater distance. If they be guided, however, by similar dispositions, and by like suggestions of nature, they will probably, in the end, as well as in the beginning of their progress, continue to agree in many particulars..."<sup>114</sup>

Blair expressed a similar thought, when he wrote that "mankind never bears such resembling features, as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give rise to the principal distinctions among nations; and divert, into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring."<sup>115</sup>

Not only does Ferguson argue that all primitive societies are similar, but he draws an almost exact parallel between contemporary primitives and the ancient Britons. He remarks that "it is in.. [the present condition of Arab clans and American tribes]... that we are to behold, as in a mirror, the features of our own progenitors; and from thence we are to draw our conclusions with respect to the influence of situations, in which, we have reason to believe, our fathers were placed."<sup>116</sup>

Monboddo, too, commented that "as the first stage of the Progression of Man is not the subject of what is commonly called History, I have been at great pains to collect Facts concerning the state from Travellers both dead and living and to compare them with the Facts related by ancient Authors; and I find such a wonderful conformity betwixt them, as I have observed in many instances, that I have as little doubt of that part of the History of Man, as of any period of his civil History."<sup>117</sup> Macpherson, also, drew a parallel between

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<sup>114</sup>Essay, p.188.

<sup>115</sup>Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London 1763), p.4.

<sup>116</sup>Essay, p.80.

<sup>117</sup>Lord Monboddo, Antient Metaphysics..III, ii-iii, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the idea of Progress, 369-70.

the ways in which the Celts, Greeks, Spartans, Old Germans, and Incas orally preserved their different histories.<sup>118</sup>

Ferguson however, goes beyond equating savage societies of the present with those of the past when he queries, "What should distinguish a German or a Briton, in the habits of his mind or his body, in his manners or apprehensions, from an American..."<sup>119</sup> He asserts that "there is a vigour, a reach of capacity, and a sensibility of mind, which may characterize as well the savage as the citizen, the slave as well as the master; and the same powers of the mind may be turned to a variety of purposes."<sup>119a</sup>

This idea of a fundamental unity among men reflects one of Ferguson's most important principles, that "all the actions of men are equally the result of their nature,"<sup>120</sup> and, in this respect, all men may be said to be subject to the same basic rule. Beyond that, throughout the Essay, though stated most clearly in his Principles of Moral and Political Science, is the belief that "the sum of gratification or disappointment may be equal in all the different situations of men."<sup>121</sup>

#### Comparative Evaluations of Primitive and Polished Societies.

Having drawn some parallels between primitive and polished societies, Ferguson proceeds to compare the different values to be found in primitive societies on the one hand and in polished ones on the other. It should be remembered, however, that such comparisons are a departure from the main subject of the Essay, and that in the light of Ferguson's commitment to improving his own society, no question of a choice between primitive and polished societies is ever articulated. Furthermore, insofar as Ferguson believes that a man's character is formed in part from his surroundings, that his needs, which are determined by his conception of them, are

<sup>118</sup> James Macpherson, "A Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal," prefaced to Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), xii-xiii.

<sup>119</sup> Essay, p. 80.      <sup>119a</sup> Essay, p. 109.      <sup>120</sup> Essay, p. 10.

<sup>121</sup> Adam Ferguson, Principles of Moral and Political Science (1792) pp. 247-248, cited by Duncan Forbes, ed. Essay, p. xiv.



met most efficiently within his own community, and that the essence of a man's happiness lies in the fulfillment of those needs, Ferguson must logically regard his own commitment to polished society as determined, as much as resulting from the exercise of his free will.

We have seen earlier how Ferguson is inclined to use a relativistic technique viewing polished society from a primitive standpoint in order to support his conceptions. We have also seen that he uses to good effect the conscious technique of introducing the perspective of a man who observes and disparages the early Greeks on the basis of the economic and ethical biases of the 18th century, when he suggests that "it would, no doubt, be pleasant to see the remarks of such a traveller as we sometimes send abroad to inspect the manners of mankind, left, unassisted by history, to collect the character of the Greeks from the state of their country, or from their practice in war."<sup>122</sup> He pushes this view even further in his Institutes of Moral Philosophy, when he speculates that "there is no external effect of which men may not entertain contradictory opinions, even of life and of death."<sup>123</sup>

But Ferguson reflects an even greater awareness of the problems of an inevitable ethnocentricity when he says that "the necessary of life is a vague and a relative term: it is one thing in the opinion of the savage; another in that of the polished citizen; it has a reference to the fancy, and to the habits of living... For it is the continual increase of riches, not any measure attained, that keeps the craving imagination at ease."<sup>124</sup> His analysis goes even deeper. He states that "the term polished, if we may judge from its etymology, originally referred to the state of nations in

<sup>122</sup> Essay, p.195.

<sup>123</sup> Adam Ferguson, Institutes of Moral Philosophy (Edinburgh, 1769), p.182.

<sup>124</sup> Essay, p.143.

respect to their laws and government. In its later applications, it refers no less to their proficiency in the liberal and mechanical arts, in literature, and in commerce. But whatever may be its application, it appears, that if there were a name still more respectable than this, every nation, even the most barbarous, or the most corrupted, would assume it; and bestow its reverse where they conceived a dislike, or apprehended a difference."<sup>125</sup> Thus we see in the Essay that Ferguson states explicitly that his judgments are founded upon an inward examination of his own character rather than upon a blind acceptance of the opinions of his society. He implies that the validity of any other basis for judging primitive societies cannot be confirmed - inasmuch as men from different societies with different value systems possess an equally unconfirmable certainty of the truth of their judgments.

This does not, however, prevent Ferguson from observing that "the trader, in rude ages, is short-sighted, fraudulent, and mercenary; but in the progress and advanced state of his art, his views are enlarged, his maxims are established; he becomes punctual, liberal, faithful, and enterprising; and in the period of general corruption, he alone has every virtue, except the force to defend his acquisitions. He needs no aid from the state but its protection."<sup>126</sup>

Here Ferguson undoubtedly believes that he is stating a fact as indisputable as his belief in the growth of the world's population.<sup>127</sup>

Incidentally, Millar showed a similar though less surprising regard for his fellow-countrymen when he wrote, "As in countries highly advanced in trade and manufactures, the trading part of the inhabitants are the

<sup>125</sup> Essay, p.205.

<sup>126</sup> Essay, p.143.

<sup>127</sup> Essay, pp.138-142.

fairest and most punctual in their dealings, they are, in the infancy of commerce, the most knavish and dishonest."<sup>128</sup> With this we might compare Robertson's description of the British colonists; "The tribes of Indians around Massachusetts Bay were feeble and unwarlike; yet from regard to justice, as well as motives of prudence, the first colonists were studious to obtain the consent of the natives before they ventured to occupy any of their lands; and though in such transactions the consideration given was often very inadequate to the value of the territory acquired, it was sufficient to satisfy the demands of the proprietors..."<sup>129</sup>

But Ferguson is also self-consciously aware of the possibilities of an ethnocentrism which might blind him to a fair assessment of primitive virtues, when he writes that "every tribe of warlike barbarians may entertain among themselves the strongest sentiments of affection and honour, while they carry to the rest of mankind the aspect of banditti and robbers. They may be indifferent to interest and superior to danger; but our sense of humanity, our regard to the rights of nations, our admiration of civil wisdom and justice, even our effeminacy itself, make us turn away with contempt, or with horror, from a scene which exhibits so few of our good qualities, and which serve so much to reproach our weakness."<sup>130</sup>

When writing most enthusiastically on the savage, Ferguson's tone is reminiscent of Macpherson and Blair: "From mere ignorance, rude minds are intoxicated with every passion; and partial to their own condition, and to their own condition, and to their own pursuits, they think that every scene is inferior to that in which they are placed.

<sup>128</sup> John Millar, "Of Justice and Generosity" in W.C. Lehmann, John Millar of Glasgow, (Cambridge, Eng. 1960), p. 385.

<sup>129</sup> William Robertson, The History of America, III (London, 1796) pp. 131-132.

<sup>130</sup> Essay, pp. 154-155.

Roused alike by success, and by misfortune, they are sanguine, ardent, and precipitant; and leave to the more knowing ages which succeed them, monuments of imperfect skill, and of rude execution in every art; but they leave likewise the marks of a vigorous and ardent spirit, which their successors are not always qualified to sustain or imitate."<sup>131</sup>

It is the cultivation of this "vigorous and ardent spirit" within the breast of his contemporaries that Ferguson is so forcefully urging in his philosophy - man's development of "the best conceptions of his understanding",<sup>132</sup> and "the best movements of his heart"<sup>133</sup> - And it is this spirit that Ferguson finds exemplified in primitive man.

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<sup>131</sup> Essay, pp. 214-215.

<sup>132</sup> Essay, p.9.

<sup>133</sup> Essay, p.9.

The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks;  
or, An Inquiry into the Circumstances which give Rise  
to Influence and Authority, in the Different Members of Society

## I

Millar's Format.

In his Introduction to the Origin, Millar writes that "the following inquiry is intended to illustrate the natural history of mankind in several important articles. This is attempted by pointing out the more obvious and common improvements which gradually arise in the state of society, and by showing the influence of these upon the manners, the laws, and the government of a people."<sup>1</sup>

Like Ferguson, Millar presents his discussion in six parts: "of the rank and condition of women in different ages," "of the jurisdiction and authority of a father over his children," "The Authority of a Chief over the members of a tribe or village," "The authority of a Sovereign, and of subordinate officers, over a society composed of different tribes or villages," "The Changes produced in the government of a people, by their progress in Arts, and in polished Manners," and "The Authority of a Master over his Servants." However, unlike Ferguson, Millar is concerned primarily with defining the growth of authority by finite stages (from a different perspective within each chapter) in order to establish that the nature of human society in fact has changed or progressed, throughout the ages. And, whereas Ferguson was more concerned with pointing out the universal equalities of human nature appearing with each stage of development, Millar both indicates the unique characteristics of each stage of development and relates these distinctive characteristics to those of other stages. Furthermore, it would seem that he does this in order to demonstrate how much, by and large, these changes have served continuously to improve the state of society.

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<sup>1</sup> John Millar, The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks; or, An Inquiry into the Circumstances which give Rise to Influence and Authority, in the Different Members of Society, 4th ed. (Edinburgh, 1806), pp. 11-12-hereafter cited as Origin.



Thus, for example, his first chapter concerning the rank and condition of women moves from a discussion of unmarried motherhood during the state of "poverty and barbarism", through the refinements "with respect to the intercourse of the sexes" of a pastoral stage, past the introduction of "agriculture", and then of "arts and manufactures", to the position of women in the present age of "Opulence and elegant arts". A similar development may also be seen in the first five chapters of the Origin; from a discussion of the rank of "women"; to that of the "father", the "chief", the "sovereign", and the "people's privileges advances". For in both cases there is a sense of increased development generally yielding increased improvement.

But one also has a sense that Millar's real concern in the Origin is not to describe a history, but to vindicate the values and accomplishments of the society in which he himself was brought up, and in this way to gratify both his own pride and that of his readers. One is alternately impressed by the range, and dismayed by the apparent inconsistency, of the viewpoints with which he attempts to substantiate his vision of the superiority of his own times.

The purpose of this chapter, however, will be to discuss - as in the case of Ferguson - Millar's views regarding the nature of primitive societies in the light of his more general thinking. We will attempt to show how some of his diverse observations might be related to paradoxes encountered in opinions he brings to bear upon the subject, and to demonstrate certain unifying perspectives behind these same paradoxes.

Therefore, although Millar does not emphasize, to the same explicit extent as Ferguson, a central vision of the values to be developed within his own society yet, for the sake of clarity as well as to facilitate comparison, we will discuss first several of Millar's more general assumptions, and then some of the paradoxes underlying his conceptions of primitive

societies. And finally, we will attempt to relate both these assumptions and paradoxes to some of those conceptions of primitive societies.

## II

### Progress.

Like Ferguson, Millar defines his purpose and method in preparing the Origin, but unlike Ferguson, he confines this definition almost entirely to the last two pages of his Introduction, whereas Ferguson referred to his own role and its difficulties repeatedly throughout the course of his Essay. One reason, perhaps, for this difference between the work of the two authors, is that Ferguson's 'history' (of a human nature which retains many constants) tended to stress the role of the author's own imagination in continuously relating that history to the state in which he found his own society. Millar's history, on the other hand, tends to stress the role of a different force, progress, in continuously relating a given state of society to those states which it is said to precede and to follow. Thus, although both authors make reference both to the author's imagination and to progress, Ferguson spends far more time developing the former, and conversely, Millar spends far more time developing the latter.

Millar argues that "there is... in man a disposition and capacity for improving his condition, by the exertion of which, he is carried on from one degree of advancement to another."<sup>2</sup> Ferguson would have agreed that there is such a disposition but he would not have implied that it is so readily brought to fruition. For Millar went even further in "Of Justice and Generosity", when he wrote that "nothing further is requisite" to induce a man "to a constant observance

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<sup>2</sup>Origin, pp. 2-3.

of the rules of justice" than "to understand his own pecuniary interest."<sup>3</sup> And we can read similarly in Blair, that "no sooner had such ideas [as moderation, humanity, and clemency] begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind easily opens to the native representations of human perfection, they would be seized and embraced."<sup>4</sup>

Millar also writes of man, that "the similarity of his wants, as well as of the faculties by which those wants are supplied, has every where produced a remarkable uniformity in the several steps of his progression,"<sup>5</sup> a belief shared as we have seen, by both Ferguson and Blair. Millar, like Ferguson, was led by this similarity to consider the effects of physiological determinants, and he states that "we are too little acquainted with the structure of the human body, to discover how it is affected by such physical circumstances [as climate], or to discern the alterations in the state of the mind, which may possibly proceed from a different conformation of bodily organs."<sup>6</sup> He concludes, then, as did Ferguson, that the effects are appreciable but unknowable. Millar inquires as well into the effects of climatic determinants, and also concludes with Ferguson and Montesquieu, that "by giving a peculiar direction to their inclinations and pursuits, .. [difference of situation] .. must be productive of correspondent habits, dispositions, and ways of thinking."<sup>7</sup> Millar is more specific than Ferguson, however, about the inevitable course which a uniform progress must follow, when he writes that after the domestication of animals and the introduction of agriculture, "the various branches of manufacture, together with commerce, its inseparable attendant, and with science

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<sup>8</sup> John Millar, "Of Justice and Generosity," in W.C. Lehmann, John Millar of Glasgow (Cambridge, England, 1960), p.386.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian..", prefaced to Ossian's Poems, (London, 1763), p.14.

<sup>5</sup> Origin, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Origin, p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Origin, p.2.

and literature, the natural offspring of ease and affluence, are introduced, and brought to maturity."<sup>8</sup> He is similarly more specific than Ferguson in enumerating various factors which might also affect this more carefully defined course of development, among them; soil fertility, crops, types of labor necessary for subsistence, the population of a community, its proficiency at various skills, trade facilities, and the facilities for communication between its members.<sup>9</sup>

In discussing the benefits which accrue from progress, Millar points out the case of "persons of small fortune", who "are subject to great inconveniencies from the disorder and violence of the times," before "the manners of men are civilized, and a regular government has been established."<sup>10</sup> It should be pointed out that almost all of Millar's value judgments are orientated toward the welfare of this group of people, unlike the more broad-minded Ferguson. Progress, however, Millar observes, by "gradual advances" renders "their situation more comfortable."<sup>11</sup> For it is their "wonderful powers and faculties, which, in a gradual progression from such rude beginnings, leads to the noblest discoveries in art or science, and to the most exalted refinement of taste and manners."<sup>12</sup> Millar thus argues that "by such gradual advances in rendering their situation more comfortable, the most important alterations are produced in the state and condition of a people."<sup>13</sup> And he includes among these alterations increase in population, the connections of society, the liberty of men to cultivate the feelings of humanity, the establishment of property, "the great source of distinction among individuals", and the recognition and protection of the various rights of mankind "arising from their multiplied connections."<sup>14</sup> Certainly, Ferguson would have accepted the

<sup>8</sup> Origin, pp. 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Origin, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Origin, p.234.

<sup>11</sup> Origin, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> Origin, p.46.

<sup>13</sup> Origin, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> Origin, p.4.

nature of the alterations described by Millar, but he would have debated vigorously the assertion that these were in fact among "the most important alterations" leading almost necessarily to mankind's improvement.

Millar differs from Ferguson even more significantly, however, by arguing that the forces of progress actually change human character, when he states that "it is evident... that these, and such other effects of improvement, which have so great a tendency to vary the state of mankind, and their manner of life, will be productive of suitable variations in their taste and sentiments, and in their general system of behaviour."<sup>15</sup>

Ferguson might have agreed, because human motivation and not human character was the issue, that "the moment they have quitted the primitive situation, and, by endeavouring to supply their natural wants, have been led to accumulate property, they are presented with very different motives of action, and acquire a new set of habits and principles."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, when Millar states that in a situation of economic dependence, where "persons of low rank, have no opportunity of acquiring an affluent fortune, or of raising themselves to superior stations; and remaining for ages in a state of dependence, they naturally contract such dispositions and habits as are suited to their circumstances,"<sup>17</sup> Ferguson would almost certainly have disagreed with Millar as to what those dispositions and habits ought to be. For when Millar is thinking of the needs created by the onrush of progress, he is inevitably thinking in terms of "the great body of the people, who form the principal part of a community and whose comfortable situation ought never to be overlooked in the provisions that are made for national happiness and prosperity."<sup>18</sup> Whereas Ferguson would be thinking of the needs shared by every man, in every time, and every culture.

<sup>15</sup> Origin, p.4.

<sup>16</sup> Origin, p.241.

<sup>17</sup> Origin, p.231.

<sup>18</sup> Origin, p.284.



Yet Millar was also aware that the needs which progress creates can sometimes become problems as well as benefits, an aspect of progress which Ferguson stresses far more emphatically than Millar. For Millar, too, agrees that "from the improvement of arts and manufactures, the ancient simplicity of manners is in a great measure destroyed."<sup>19</sup> He notices that "the progress of arts and manufactures will contribute to undermine and weaken... [the father's] .. power, and even to raise the members of his family to a state of freedom and independence."<sup>20</sup> He may mean to suggest that this undermining of authority, combined with the introduction of "luxury", which "contributes yet more to enervate the minds of men, who, according as they enjoy more ease and pleasure at home, feel greater aversion to the hardships and dangers of a military life, and put a lower value upon that sort of reputation which it affords,"<sup>21</sup> together are responsible in part for "a variety of tedious litigation"<sup>22</sup> which is also the fruit of progress. Such a harvest, on the other hand, could not have been wholly unattractive to Millar, a law professor at the University of Glasgow, who elsewhere in the Origin discusses enthusiastically the growth of legal systems;<sup>23</sup> obviously it is the litigations he deplors and the systems he approves of. Yet Ferguson would almost certainly have seen a contradiction, in that the one implied the other and that personal property implied both.

Millar is, nevertheless, led by such arguments to concede, as Ferguson would have insisted, that a sort of reversible progress does exist, and that "it ought to be considered, that the growth and decay of society have, in some respects, a resemblance to each other; which, independent of imitation, is naturally productive of similar manners and customs."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Origin, p.232.

<sup>20</sup>Origin, p.129.

<sup>21</sup>Origin, p.222.

<sup>22</sup>Origin, p.226.

<sup>23</sup>Origin, p.4.

<sup>24</sup>Origin, p.219.

This theme is seen also in Dunbar's Essays, when the author writes that "the silent course of time is continually taking away from that which we possess, and from the high perfection of whatever we have cultivated and refined.. If progress is not made, we must decline.. [and] we ought to endeavour to compensate these inevitable losses, by the acquisition of other advantages and augmentations of good..."<sup>25</sup> Millar, however, unlike Ferguson, suggests that this process of decline is knowable, even where it is inevitable, when he states that "when a great and polished nation begins to relapse into its primitive rudeness and barbarism, the dominions which belonged to it are in danger of falling asunder; and the same institutions may become necessary for preventing the different parts of the kingdom from being separated, which had been formerly employed in order to unite the several members of an extensive society."<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note that this concern with inevitable decline ran even deeper in the work of Lord Monboddo, who wrote that "as civil society... grows older, vices and diseases, the natural consequence, as I have shown, of that society, increases; so that the progeny grows worse, and likewise is not so abundant..."<sup>27</sup>

### Utility.

Among the many benefits which progress brings, Millar writes that "when a people become civilized, and when they have made considerable progress in commerce and manufactures, one would imagine they should entertain more liberal views, and be influenced by more extensive considerations of utility."<sup>28</sup> For just as Ferguson's standard of values was to be found in his own heart and intellect, so Millar's evaluations are primarily grounded in considerations of utility and practicability, as when he writes that "unless we are acquainted with the circumstances which have recommended any set of regulations, we cannot form a

<sup>25</sup> James Dunbar, Essays, p.158, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations," in ELH 12 (1945), p.210.

<sup>26</sup> Origin, p.218.

<sup>27</sup> Lord Monboddo, Antient Metaphysics, V, 248-249, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934) p.285.

<sup>28</sup> Origin, p.250.

just notion of their utility, or even determine, in any case, how far they are practicable."<sup>29</sup> Henry Mackenzie used this very argument to support his favourable view of savage society incorporating at the same time, a stress like Ferguson's on the value of the active fulfillment of a man's inner potential character, when he wrote in The Man of the World, "When we consider the perfect freedom subsisting in this rude and simple state of society, where rule is only acknowledged for the purpose of immediate utility to those who obey, and ceases whenever that purpose of subordination is accomplished; where greatness cannot use oppression, nor wealth excite envy; where the desires are native to the heart, and the languor of satiety is unknown; where, if there is no refined sensation of delight, there is also no ideal source of calamity; we shall not less wonder at the inhabitants feeling no regret for the want of those delicate pleasures of which a more polished people is possessed."<sup>30</sup>

So important is the principle of utility to Millar, that he employs it as a principal argument in attacking slavery, which, he points out, Christianity has never consistently opposed.<sup>31</sup> He writes that "when the arts begin to flourish, when the wonderful effects of industry and skill in cheapening commodities, and in bringing them to perfection, became more and more conspicuous, it must be evident that little profit can be drawn from the labour of a slave."<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, this is an argument which Adam Smith developed at great length in his Wealth of Nations, when he wrote, that "the experience of all ages and nations, I believe, demonstrates that the work done by slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is in the end the dearest of any."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Origin, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Henry Mackenzie, The Man of the World, II (London, 1773), p.251, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, (Baltimore, 1934), p.61.

<sup>31</sup> Origin, p.272. <sup>32</sup> Origin, p.251.

<sup>33</sup> Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, I (London, 1961), p.411.

Liberty.

Such a stress on utility as a key value in helping the individual to reach decisions, implies that freedom for the individual to make such decisions must receive a proportional stress in the thought of Millar, as when he writes of "those sentiments of liberty which necessity alone is able to subdue."<sup>34</sup> He further argues that equally civilized nations may show a great variety of maxims and customs, and that "the laws and customs of the modern European nations have carried the advantage of liberty to a height which was never known in any other age or country."<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, he favors the government of a small state in preference to a large one, characteristically, because in such a state there is greater likelihood of a free constitution.<sup>36</sup> Ferguson, too, had expressed his preference for such a state, but his reasoning was not so much based on the external freedom it gave the citizen as upon the opportunities it offered for the maximum development of inner character potential.

Such a preference as Millar's for the government of a small state might well be based upon certain reservations which Millar held regarding the deployment of authority in the society from which he was writing. On the one hand, as we have seen, Millar is somewhat unhappy with the contemporary reduction of parental jurisdiction<sup>37</sup>, for it is his view that members of families within his own society are too independent, when he writes that "the tendency, however, of a commercial age is rather towards the opposite extreme, and may occasion some apprehension that the members of a family will be raised to greater independence than is consistent with good order, and with a proper domestic subordination."<sup>38</sup> And on the other hand, not only is he distressed by some of the values his

<sup>34</sup> Origin, p.232.

<sup>35</sup> Origin, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Origin, pp.236-237.

<sup>37</sup> Origin, p.131.

<sup>38</sup> Origin, p.138.



society holds, but he is also concerned that his society does not always act in accordance with the principles it states. For he writes of the British colonists, that "it affords a curious spectacle to observe, that the same people who talk in a high strain of political liberty, and who consider the privilege of imposing their own taxes as one of the inalienable rights of mankind, would make no scruple of reducing a great proportion of their fellow-creatures into circumstances by which they are not only deprived of property, but almost of every species of right. Fortune perhaps never produced a situation more calculated to ridicule a liberal hypothesis, or to show how little the conduct of men is at the bottom directed by any philosophical principles."<sup>39</sup> Of course, Ferguson, too, had observed the extent to which man's behavior is not motivated by rational principles. But whereas Ferguson saw the influence of non-rational motives as normal, Millar regards such influences as the exception rather than the rule. And we might also note that in making such censures, Millar is usually talking about colonists, and not his own Scottish culture, when for example, he states that the oppression of slaves to prevent their revolting "is at least the pretence for that shocking barbarity to which the negroes in our colonies are frequently exposed, and which is exhibited even by persons of the weaker sex, in an age distinguished for humanity and politeness."<sup>40</sup> In generalizing upon the subject, Millar makes it clear that his generalization is intended for historical analysis, without suggesting that it might, as well, be applied to his own culture, as when he states that "in proportion to the opulence and refinement of those nations, the number of their slaves was increased, and the grievances to which they were subjected became the more intolerable."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Origin, p.294.

<sup>40</sup> Origin, p.259.

<sup>41</sup> Origin, p.282.



Ferguson would have been interested in such generalizations primarily insofar as they applied to his own culture.

Opulence.

Just as doctrines of utility are fostered by increasing liberty, so, too, in Millar's mind, liberty is fostered by increasing wealth. He supports this view by arguing that "the farther a nation advances in opulence and refinement, it has occasion to employ a greater number of merchants, of tradesmen and artificers; and as the lower people, in general, become thereby more independent in their circumstances, they begin to exert those sentiments of liberty which are natural to the mind of man, and which necessity alone is able to subdue."<sup>42</sup> He argues that this process reinforces itself, when he states that "wherever men of inferior condition are enabled to live in affluence by their own industry, and, in procuring their livelihood, have little occasion to court the favour of their superiors, there we may expect that ideas of liberty will be universally diffused."<sup>43</sup> In this manner, it can be said that "these circumstances have a tendency to introduce a democratic government" inasmuch as "power, the usual attendant of wealth, will be in some measure diffused over all the members of the community."<sup>44</sup> For, in an argument which Ferguson, who argued strongly against this very identification, would have abhorred, Millar explicitly champions the premise that "money, therefore, becomes more and more the only means of procuring honours and dignities; and the sordid pursuits of avarice are made subservient to the nobler purposes of ambition."<sup>45</sup>

Millar balances this judgment with an awareness that "so widely different are the effects of opulence and refinement, which, at the same time that they furnish the king with a standing army, the great engine of tyranny and oppression, have also a tendency to inspire the people with notions of liberty and independence."<sup>46</sup> Speaking again in terms of

<sup>42</sup> Origin, p.232.

<sup>44</sup> Origin, p.235.

<sup>43</sup> Origin, pp.241-242.

<sup>45</sup> Origin, pp.234-235.

<sup>46</sup> Origin, p.236.

historical analysis, he points out that the development of agriculture "obliges men to fix their residence in the neighborhood of that spot where their labour is chiefly to be employed, and thereby givesrise to property in land, the most valuable and permanent species of wealth; by the unequal distribution of which a greater disproportion is made in the fortune and rank of individuals, and the causes of their dissension and jealousy are, of course, extended."<sup>47</sup> And he acknowledges some vulnerability on the part of his society, when he declares that "even when we peruse the remote history of polished nations, we have seldom any difficulty in tracing them to a state of the same rudeness and barbarism" as one finds in contemporary primitive societies.<sup>48</sup> In this, he is, of course, noting a parallel which was also observed by Ferguson.

Nevertheless, while thus briefly remarking upon the possible disadvantage of the growth of wealth, he argues that these are more than offset by a variety of other factors. For example, he comments that "the authority derived from wealth is not only greater than that which arises from more personal accomplishments, but also more stable and permanent. Extraordinary endowments, either of mind or body, can operate only during the life of the possessor, and are seldom continued for any length of time in the same family."<sup>49</sup> Not only does the authority of wealth yield social stability, but "those improvements in the state of society, which are the common effects of opulence and refinement, will at the same time dispose the father to use his power with greater moderation. By living in affluence and security, he is more at leisure to exert the social affections, and to cultivate those arts which tend to soften and humanize the temper."<sup>50</sup> And it is because of this theoretical softening and humanizing, that Millar can write with assurance that the "pernicious consequences"

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<sup>47</sup> Origin, pp.67-68.

<sup>48</sup> Origin, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> Origin, pp.152-153 .

<sup>50</sup> Origin, p.129.

of an inferior legal system "could not fail to attract the notice of a polished people" and at length to have produced "the more perfect plan of providing for the maintenance of judges by the appointment of a fixed salary in place of their former precarious emoluments."<sup>51</sup>

More specifically, Millar argues that "men, being less oppressed with their own wants, are more at liberty to cultivate the feelings of humanity."<sup>52</sup> For, to the extent that "men.. find less difficulty in the attainment of bare necessities, their prospects are gradually enlarged, their appetites and desires are more and more awakened and called forth in pursuit of the several conveniencies of life..,"<sup>53</sup> among them, "science and literature, the natural offspring of ease and affluence."<sup>54</sup>

#### Commerce and Industriousness.

Millar argues that opulence is fostered in turn by "the various branches of manufacture, together with commerce, its inseparable attendant,"<sup>55</sup> citing among other examples, "the advancement of the Italian states in commerce and manufactures so early in the thirteenth century" which "produced a degree of opulence and luxury" followed, soon after, by the cultivation of the fine arts, and the improvement of taste and science."<sup>56</sup> To a lesser extent, he points out, this same process could be observed in the first stages of development of early tribal society, when he writes regarding such societies of the "frequent opportunities of meeting in their common sports and diversion: the leading men entertain one another with rustic hospitality and magnificence; inter-marriages begin to take place between their respective families; and the various connexions of society are gradually multiplied

<sup>51</sup> Origin, p.227.

<sup>52</sup> Origin, p.4.

<sup>53</sup> Origin, p.3.

<sup>54</sup> Origin, pp.3-4.

<sup>55</sup> Origin, p.3.

<sup>56</sup> Origin, p.84.

and extended."<sup>57</sup> And he generalizes that "the advancement of commerce and the arts, together with the diffusion of knowledge in the present age, has of late contributed to the removal of many prejudices, and been productive of enlarged opinions, both upon this [slavery] and upon a variety of other subjects."<sup>58</sup>

He points out that wealth and commerce were themselves promoted by a sense of industriousness on the part of the individual within a society, inasmuch as "every man who is industrious may entertain the hope of gaining a fortune."<sup>59</sup> He argues that regular employment, like established property, promotes community stability, when he states that an "increase of industry... creates a number of lucrative employments which requires a constant attention, and gives rise to a variety of tradesmen and artificers, who cannot afford to leave their business for the transient and uncertain advantages to be derived from the pillage of their enemies."<sup>60</sup> In an argument suggesting an approach more like Ferguson's, he writes that "the people who live in a cold country find... that little or nothing is to be obtained without labour; and being subjected to numberless hardships, while they are forced to contend with the ruggedness of the soil, and the severity of the seasons, in earning their scanty provision, they become active and industrious and acquire those dispositions and talents which proceed from the constant and vigorous exercise of the mind and body."<sup>61</sup> Whereas, he writes in contrast, "the inhabitants... of ..[warm countries].., while they enjoy a degree of affluence, and, while by the mildness of the climate they are exempted from many inconveniences and wants, are seldom disposed to any laborious exertion, and thus, acquiring habits of indolence, become addicted to sensual pleasure, and liable to all those infirmities which are nourished by illness and sloth."<sup>62</sup> Thus, he observes

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<sup>57</sup> Origin, p.177.

<sup>58</sup> Origin, p.295.

<sup>59</sup> Origin, p.235.

<sup>60</sup> Origin, p.222.

<sup>61</sup> Origin, p.9.

<sup>62</sup> Origin, p.8.

that an employment which "requires greater industry and labour... multiplies the comforts and conveniencies of life, and therefore excites in mankind a stronger desire of obtaining those pleasures to which they are prompted by their natural appetites."<sup>63</sup> And he even suggests that in this case, where the employment is agriculture, "the passions which relate to the commerce of the sexes may be... raised to a greater height."<sup>64</sup>

In conclusion, then, Millar's evaluations of human society and progress are primarily grounded in considerations of utility and practicability, which in turn are based upon liberty, opulence, commerce, and industriousness. When we realize that Millar's concept of industriousness is itself based on principles of utility and practicability, we will have come full circle on one major aspect of Millar's thought. Ferguson could never have laid such a stress on the priority of a system which so completely ignores the self-realization in each man of a character which is individual and yet shared by all men. And Millar could never have accepted an interpretation of history based as strongly as was Ferguson's on the similarity of all men, in all places, and at all periods. We may observe the remarkable extent to which they approach each other in so many opinions.

#### Some Paradoxes.

However, despite the apparent unity behind this aspect of Millar's thought, we have also observed a number of contradictions. For example, not only does Millar observe that progress brings with itself problems as well as solutions (and that, notwithstanding the benefits which it usually brings to man, its processes are also reversible), but he also calculates the benefits of progress in terms of one segment of the total population - the merchant classes - while simultaneously retaining an open eye for

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<sup>63</sup> Origin, p.67.

<sup>64</sup> Origin, p.67.



the continuing torments of slaves. Furthermore, he eulogizes the realization of liberty in his own society, although deploring the decay of familial authority about him and protesting the hypocrisy of the British colonies; and he observes that the influence of opulence, even in his own society, might be bitter, as well as sweet. But lastly, he argues for greater leisure and yet rails against sloth and indolence, without clearly distinguishing between the availability of leisure time and the way in which it ought to be used. In fact, if anything, he suggests that greater industry providing yet more time for application might be a rationale complete within itself. It is with regard to these three paradoxes - concerning the effects of progress, to whom, and for what purpose - that a great many of his differing opinions concerning primitive societies arise. But there are other conflicts which find expression in his thinking.

#### Scottish and Scriptural Influences.

For example, there is the conflicting instance of progress within his own environment. Coexisting within the same society were the mercantile development of the Lowlands of Scotland, on which the assumptions of his arguments bestow the highest praise; and on the other hand, the virtual lack of economic and social change in the Highlands, which he brings up several times in the course of the Origin.

In his discussions of the Highlands, he is willing to admit that "the slavery of the villains, which was probably of similar nature to what obtained in the other countries of Europe, appears in like manner to have gone into disuse without any aid of statute," but he observes that "the period when this change was effected has not been ascertained by lawyers or historians."<sup>65</sup> He remarks on the primitivism of the

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<sup>65</sup>Origin, p.278.

practice, "still to be found in Scotland, where, in some cases, the landlord is accustomed to stock the farm, and the tenant pays him a rent in kind, consisting of a certain proportion of the fruits."<sup>66</sup> And he also notices that within his own country, if not in the Highlands, "considering the many advantages which a country derives from the freedom of the labouring people, it is to be regretted that any species of slavery should still remain in the dominions of Great Britain, in which liberty is generally so well understood, and so highly valued. The situation of the colliers and salters in Scotland may seem of little consequence, as the number of persons engaged in that employment is not very great, and their servitude is not very grievous. The detriment, however, which arises from thence to the proprietor of such works is manifest."<sup>67</sup>

Thus Millar's value systems lead him to sympathize with the employer rather than with the depressed employee, perhaps also indicating a belief in the priority of the community in certain instances over the individual - another unexpected link with Ferguson. For his sympathies are certainly not engaged on behalf of laboring countrymen when he writes that "this happy arrangement of things [where the lower classes are both industrious and prosperous] is naturally produced by commerce and manufacture; but it would be as vain to look for it in the uncultivated parts of the world, as to look for the independent spirit of an English waggoner among persons of low rank in the highlands of Scotland."<sup>68</sup> In "Of Justice and Generosity", he goes so far as to make a comparison between "barbaric rapine" in Tahiti, Kamchatka, among the ancient Egyptians and the ancient Gauls, and the stealing of cattle in the highlands of Scotland.<sup>69</sup> He even observes that "traces of this primitive custom may still

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<sup>66</sup> Origin, p.268.

<sup>67</sup> Origin, p.289.

<sup>68</sup> Origin, p.242.

<sup>69</sup> John Millar, "Of Justice and Generosity," in W.C.Lehmann, John Millar of Glasgow (Cambridge, England, 1960), p.385.

be discovered in the law of Scotland; according to which, a marriage dissolved within a year and day, and without a child, has no legal consequences, but restores the property of either party to the same situation as if no such alliance had ever existed."<sup>70</sup>

A number of other eighteenth-century Scottish writers who were interested in primitivism turned their attention to contemporary primitive Scotland, despite one Scot's observation that "the modern itch after the knowledge of foreign places is so prevalent, that the generality of mankind bestow little thought or time upon the place of their nativity."<sup>71</sup> One of the most prominent among them, Macpherson, wrote that "the genius of the highlanders has suffered a great change within these few years. The communication with the rest of the island is open, and the introduction of trade and manufactures has destroyed that leisure which was formerly dedicated to hearing and repeating the poems of ancient times. Many have now learned to leave their mountains, and seek their fortunes in a milder climate; and though a certain amor patriae may sometimes bring them back, they have, during their absence, imbibed enough of foreign manners to despise the customs of their ancestors. Bards have been long disused, and the spirit of genealogy has greatly subsided. They have not, however, thrown off the good qualities of their ancestors. Hospitality still subsists, and an uncommon civility to strangers. Friendship is inviolable, and revenge less blindly followed than formerly."<sup>72</sup> This continuity between the Ossianic past and the more recent century is, however, belied by Blair, who states that "to suppose that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the state of the Highlands to have been in a state of gross ignorance and barbarity, there should have arisen in that country a poet, of such exquisite genius, and of such deep knowledge of mankind,

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<sup>70</sup> Origin, p.20.

<sup>71</sup> Martin, in the "Preface to his Description.. cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, p.371.

<sup>72</sup> James Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), p.xv.

and of history, as to divest himself of the ideas and manners of his own age and to give us a just and natural picture of a state of society ancients by a thousand years... is a supposition that transcends all bounds of credulity."<sup>73</sup>

The Bible should also, perhaps, be mentioned along with Millar's awareness of rural conditions in Scotland. It is an environmental influence mentioned explicitly in the Origin, and predisposes Millar to take a disapproving view of primitive societies. For we have a sense that he almost regards them as closer than his own society to a state of original sin when he writes, that "it seems unnecessary to observe, that what is here said with regard to marriage, together with many other Remarks which follow concerning the manners of early nations, can only be applied to those who had lost all knowledge of the original institutions, which, as the sacred scriptures inform us, were communicated to mankind by an extraordinary revelation from heaven."<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, despite his explicit identification of fallen man with primitive man, the suggestion frequently remains in his writings that primitive living conditions might be associated with those of the Garden of Eden.

#### A Golden Age.

We have observed certain paradoxes implicit in the evaluative criteria Millar applies to his examination of different states of human society, and we have seen the appearance in his work of conflicting aspects of his cultural and religious environment which might also have influenced his view of primitive societies. Another source of his breadth of vision (a source reflected directly in his statements in the Origin) is the variety of actual facts available to him concerning primitive societies. We have seen the ready association he made between contemporary and

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<sup>73</sup>Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), pp.19-20.

<sup>74</sup>Origin, Note, p.19.

historically recorded primitive societies in the case of cattle theft in Scotland, in his work, "Of Justice and Generosity." Related associations are made in the Origin, as when he associates the Malays with feudal Europeans,<sup>75</sup> or goes so far as to draw a parallel between the beliefs of the common people of Britain and of the American savage; he records that "Father Lafitau takes notice of a particular custom among the savages of America which shows the indifference with which their marriages are usually contracted, and marks, at the same time, the inattention of that people to the gratification of their passions... In some parts of Great Britain, the common people hold it a point of decorum, that after the ceremony of marriage, the married persons should sleep together one night without consummation."<sup>76</sup> There is, of course, a major difference between Millar's suggesting an analogy between the two cultures on the basis of one point of decorum, and Ferguson's emphasis that the general characteristics of human nature are the same for all people; yet there is also a similarity in the fact that they both do make an identification of some sort between their own culture and that of the American Indian.

Millar writes that "in the agreeable pictures of the golden age, handed down from remote antiquity, we may discover the opinion that was generally entertained of the situation and manners of shepherds... There is good reason to believe, that these representations of the pastoral life were not inconsistent with the real condition of shepherds, and that the poets, who were the first historians, have only embellished the traditions of early times."<sup>77</sup> And by so writing, he suggests a potential, and at least subconscious, link between primitive arcadia and the ancient primitive state, which implies a further link to primitive states

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<sup>75</sup> Origin, p.216.

<sup>76</sup> Origin, note, p.22.

<sup>77</sup> Origin, p.65.



generally. In addition, this tenuous link is strengthened by association with the more vigorous society of Ossian, when Millar writes that "in the compositions of Ossian, which describe the manners of a people acquainted with pasturage, there is often a degree of tenderness and delicacy of sentiment which can hardly be equalled in the most refined productions of a civilized age."<sup>78</sup> In fact, "the leisure, tranquillity, and retirement of a pastoral life, seem calculated, in a peculiar manner, to favour the indulgence of those indolent gratifications. From higher notions of refinement a nicer distinction is made with regard to the objects of desire; and the mere animal pleasure is more frequently accompanied with a correspondence of inclination and sentiment."<sup>79</sup> Yet pastoral tranquillity would seem to play a very small role in the daily life of Ossian, whom he so admires. It is possible to sense Millar attempting to find an economic justification for the enjoyment of a leisure and tranquillity of which, as we have discussed previously, he can only tentatively approve. In this way, then, Millar implies a tentative link between the refinement of Ossian's age and the customs of other primitive societies, although it is a link he explicitly denies.

The vision of an heroic age, golden with regard to one aspect or another, was a concept shared by a large number of eighteenth-century Scottish writers, as we observed while discussing Ferguson. Millar, at another time, commented upon this tendency by noting that "moral and religious writers have usually thought proper to treat the subject in the style of satire and invective, and in declaiming against the vices of their own times, have been led to exalt the merit of distant ages."<sup>80</sup> However, as often as not, the

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<sup>78</sup> Origin, p.65.

<sup>79</sup> Origin, p. 58.

<sup>80</sup> John Millar "Of Justice and Generosity" in W.C.Lehmann, John Millar of Glasgow (Cambridge, England, 1960), p.383.

tone of these comparisons would suggest rather more a sense of nostalgia than a desire to inculcate moral precepts, as when John Ogilvie, the minister of Midmar, Aberdeenshire, wrote that "at a period when Manners were uniform and natural, the Ecologue, whose principal excellence lies in exhibiting simple and lively pictures of common objects and common characters, was brought at once to a state of greater perfection by the persons who introduced it, than it could have arrived at in a more improved and enlightened aera."<sup>81</sup>

William Duff, another of the many ministers writing on the subject, observed "that Original Poetic Genius will in general be displayed at its utmost Vigour in the Early and Uncultivated Periods of Society which are peculiarly favourable to it; and that it will seldom appear in a very high Degree in Cultivated Life."<sup>82</sup> But Duff also wrote that "when we consider learning and critical knowledge as unfavourable to original Poetry, we hope we shall not be accused of pleading the cause of ignorance, rusticity, and barbarism; any more than when we speak of the simple uncultivated periods of society on the productions of the above-mentioned art, we shall be supposed to prefer those rude and artless ages to a highly civilized life."<sup>83</sup> James Beattie made the same point poetically:

"... Nor let it faith exceed,  
That Nature forms a rustic taste so nice.  
Ah! had they been of court or city breed,  
Such delicacy were right marvellous indeed."<sup>84</sup>

Thomas Blackwell gave the point one of its most forceful expressions, in his observation that "Peace, Harmony, and good Order, which make the happiness of a People, are the Bane of a Poem that subsists by Wonder and Surprise... and

<sup>81</sup> John Ogilvie, Poems on Several Subjects, pp. xii-xiii, cited by R.H. Pearce, "The Eighteenth-century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations," in ELH 12 (1945), p. 214.

<sup>82</sup> William Duff, Essay, p. 273, cited by R.H. Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations," in ELH, 12, (1945), p. 215.

<sup>83</sup> William Duff, Essay, V, cited by R.H. Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations," in ELH, 12 (1945), p. 215.

<sup>84</sup> James Beattie, The Minstrel, I, lii, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934), p. 105.

tho' the Pleasure arising from a Taste of the sublimer kinds of Writing, may make your Lordship regret the Silence of the Muses, yet I am persuaded that you will join in the Wish, That we may never be a proper Subject of an Heroic poem."<sup>85</sup>

#### Rude Barbarism.

However, Millar only occasionally implies an identification between contemporary primitive societies and an historical vision of primitive leisure and refinement either superior or inferior to modern conditions. Far more often he writes from the entirely different point of view that "a savage who earns his food by hunting and fishing, or by gathering the spontaneous fruits of the earth, is incapable of attaining any considerable refinement in his pleasures. He finds so much difficulty, and is exposed to so many hardships in procuring mere necessities, that he has no leisure or encouragement to aim at the luxuries and conveniences of life."<sup>86</sup> Not only has he no leisure, but his society is structured by institutions and customs "such as might be expected from the limited experience, as well as from the rude manners of an early age."<sup>87</sup> And as a result of lacking leisure time and civilised customs and institutions, "mere savages are little acquainted with such refinements" as romantic love.<sup>88</sup> Instead, their lives are characterized by the theft and plunder, which he also observed in the Scottish Highlands.

#### The Double Vision.

Millar appears to accept a vision of a golden age, which leads him to praise a state of indolence and

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<sup>85</sup> Thomas Blackwell, Enquiry, pp.27-28, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations," ELH, 12 $\chi$  (1945), p.214.

<sup>86</sup> Origin, p.14.

<sup>87</sup> Origin, p.250

<sup>88</sup> Origin, p.28.

tranquillity which he elsewhere deplores. But he also accepts potentially conflicting vision of rude barbarity, according to which he is led to deplore a state of industriousness and utility which he elsewhere praises.

We may note the existence of this same double vision in the work of other eighteenth-century Scottish writers, as well. Thomson, for example, in his poem, Liberty, wrote of a benevolent pastoral Britain "in the dawn of time", a Britain in which:

"Few were Offences Properties, and Laws,  
Beneath the rural Portal, Palm-o'erspread,  
The Father-Senate met....  
The Singular Arts were all their simple Wants  
Had urged to light..."<sup>89</sup>

And yet he also wrote:

".. when to Manhood grown, and endless Joys,  
Led on by equal Toils, the Bosom fir'd;  
Lewd lazy Rapine broke primaeval Peace,  
And hid in Caves, and idle Forests drear...  
The last worst Monsters of the shaggy Wood,  
Turn'd the keen Arrow, and the sharpen'd Spear."<sup>90</sup>

This historically successive double vision might suggest the argument in vogue which Kames debated, that when "the earth was still thinly populated and there was no contest over food or land, men lived innocently and cordially together... In that state, moral principles joined their influence with that of national affection, to secure individuals from harm."<sup>91</sup> But such an explanation does not account for Ogilvie's epic descriptions of a savage Britain;

"Gigantic shapes, that, in the bull's rough hide,  
Or shagged vestments of the brouzing goat,  
O'ershading ruthless hearts, and grasping fierce  
Some oak's broad fragment, or unshapen mass  
Of rude and knobbed ore; along the wood  
Stride grim and horrible. Rouz'd by their tread

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<sup>89</sup>James Thomson, Liberty, I, 9-16 (London, 1735), p.10.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid. 27-57 (London, 1735), p.11.

<sup>91</sup>Lord Kames, Sketches of the History of Man, II (Edinburgh, 1774), p.315, cited in Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934), p.99.

Wolves darting rapid to the cavern's mouth.  
 Keen with the rage of hunger, and intent  
 To bear some morsel to their famish'd young;  
 Eyeing the grizzly savage as he moves,  
 Gnash their white tusks, and lashing in their rage  
 The rock, and howling, seek their inmost den."<sup>92</sup>

which exists simultaneously with a pastoral Britain, where:

"The Muse beholds, as erst the first of men,  
 Tending their flocks, that clothe the mountain's side;  
 Or in the mazes of the sunny vale  
 Rearing the golden fruitage, or reclined  
 On the green turf; A simple race! in arms  
 When arms were needed, nor unskill'd, nor slow;  
 But short of their bounds, and vain their utmost  
 power."<sup>93</sup>

This evident belief in two such sharply contrasting types of primitive societies - although one is a society of hunters and the other a society of herders - would suggest that although most of the time during the eighteenth century, whatever one's outlook, primitive societies were regarded as being so similar that they could be treated as a unit, at other times, distinctions between different types of primitive societies were made.

It is perhaps primarily this tendency to regard a variety of different societies as one society which accounts for Millar's contrasting observations of fact, as well as his neglect of accounting for the bias of different explorers in observing the same society.

Yet Millar also possesses a philosophical double vision regarding primitive man's place in the animal hierarchy, between man and the beasts, which accounts for an additional oscillation of attitudes. For example, on the one hand he is able to remark that "in many parts of.. [the globe today]... the inhabitants are so destitute of culture, as to appear a little above the condition of brute animals,"<sup>94</sup> and in another discussion to note that "among inferior animals, we may discern the influence of the same principle in forming an

<sup>92</sup>John Ogilvie, Britannia, I (Aberdeen, 1801), p.55.

<sup>93</sup>John Ogilvie, Britannia, I (Aberdeen, 1801), p.56.

<sup>94</sup>Origin, p.2.



association between individuals of different sexes."<sup>95</sup>  
 And on the other hand, he can remark that "it ought, at the same time to be remembered, that, how poor and wretched soever the aspect of human nature in this early state, it contains the seeds of improvement, which, by long care and culture, are capable of being brought to maturity..."<sup>96</sup>

There is, of course, no true conflict between these two outlooks, as there is no true conflict between Millar's ideas concerning the possible uses of wealth. But there are differences of stress which color Millar's thinking on related subjects and between which he can be seen to move.

### III and IV

#### Primitive Activity.

It is from this background of thought that Millar delivers his conceptions regarding primitive societies.

For example, Millar observes that "among those who are almost continually employed in war, or in hunting, and who, by their manner of life, are exposed to numberless hardships and dangers, activity, strength, courage, and military skill, are the chief accomplishments that are held in high estimation."<sup>97</sup> And he also points out that as men in primitive societies "have been brought up together from their infancy, and have little intercourse with those of a different community, their affections are raised to a greater height, in proportion to the narrowness of that circle to which they are confined."<sup>98</sup> Now, previously Millar had endorsed freedom of action and industriousness as qualities to be cultivated within a society. However, he is led to argue in the case of primitive societies, that "as the ordinary life of a savage renders him hardy and robust, so he is a stranger to all those considerations of

<sup>95</sup> Origin, p.18.

<sup>96</sup> Origin, pp.45-46.

<sup>97</sup> Origin, p.32.

<sup>98</sup> Origin, p.142.

utility, by which, in a polished nation, men are commonly induced to restrain their appetites, and to abstain from violating the possessions of each other."<sup>99</sup> He continues that "different clans or tribes of barbarians are therefore disposed to rob and plunder one another, as often as they have an opportunity of doing it with success."<sup>100</sup> And at other times in the Origin he feels free to refer to both "the boisterous dispositions"<sup>101</sup> and "the barbarous manners of mere savages."<sup>102</sup>

We may detect in this reasoning a contradiction of Millar's previous discussion in favor of northern rather than southern climates. And it is impossible not to sense that the real movement of his thought is not from 1) savage robustness leads to unrestrained appetites, to 2) therefore, savage robustness is a bad quality, to 3) therefore, savage communities possess bad qualities. Rather, it would seem to be from 1) the polished society within which I find myself is superior to any primitive **society**, to 2) in my own society, "our feelings are continually gathering strength by a comparison with those of the people around us; and we blush at every deviation from that concealment and reserve which we have been taught to maintain, and which long practice has rendered habitual,"<sup>103</sup> whereas savages are less restrained, to 3) therefore, the robust life of the savage which yields this lack of restraint is a bad quality. Nevertheless, Millar almost always chooses to express his thought in the former rather than the latter form.

#### The Cultural Impoverishment of Primitive Societies.

In another set of arguments, Millar states that "a nation of savages, who feel the want of almost every thing requisite for the support of life, must have their attention directed to a small number of objects, to the acquisition of

<sup>99</sup> Origin, p. 141.

<sup>100</sup> Origin, p. 141.

<sup>101</sup> Origin, p. 246.

<sup>102</sup> Origin, p. 65.

<sup>103</sup> Origin, p. 28.

food and clothing, or the procuring shelter from the inclemencies of the weather; and their ideas and feelings, in conformity to their situation, must, of course, be narrow and contracted,"<sup>104</sup> a suggestion somewhat different from the resulting heightening of the affections which he also referred to and which we have just discussed. In a development of this aspect, Millar writes that "as the uniformity of their life supplies them with few occurrences, and as they have no opportunity of acquiring any great variety of knowledge, their thoughts are the more fixed upon those particular objects which have once excited their attention; they retain more steadily whatever impressions they have received, and become the more devoted to those entertainments and practices with which they have been acquainted."<sup>105</sup> Thus, by this logic, savages are again shown not to be ruled by utility, but in this case, by custom, and thus, again, a justification is provided for seeing primitive society in a bad light. However, the breadth of argument Millar uses in support of this point is wide indeed. For whereas there is little incompatibility in the suggestion that savages are both unrestrained and unimaginative, it is somewhat more difficult to see them, as Millar suggests, as both lacking in discipline and orientated toward tradition.

Millar also accounts for his conception of primitive simplicity by writing that the savage's "wants are few, in proportion to the narrowness of his circumstances. With him the great object is to be able to satisfy his hunger, and, after the utmost exertions of labour and activity, to enjoy the relief of idleness and repose."<sup>106</sup> And because of these utmost exertions, Millar observes that "he has no time for cultivating a correspondence with the other sex, nor for attending to those

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<sup>104</sup> Origin, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> Origin, p. 142.

<sup>106</sup> Origin, pp. 14-15.

enjoyments which result from it; and his desires being neither cherished by affluence nor inflamed by indulgences, are allowed to remain in that moderate state which renders them barely sufficient for the continuation of the species."<sup>107</sup> In this manner, Millar argues that the savage lacks polished refinement, thereby again implying primitive inferiority to modern sophistication. But he bases his argument this time upon the savage's lack of leisure time and his necessary industriousness.

Yet it is also possible for Millar, in analyzing primitive simplicity, to write that "it cannot be supposed, therefore, that the passions of sex will rise to any considerable height in the breast of a savage. He must have little regard for pleasures which he can purchase at so easy a rate."<sup>108</sup> And later in the Origin, he denigrates the savage, arguing that "mankind, in a rude age, are commonly in readiness to go out to war, as often as their circumstances require it. From their extreme idleness, a military expedition is seldom inconvenient for them..."<sup>108a</sup> Thus, Millar's savages are both too busy and yet too idle, and thus another possible inconsistency illustrates the breadth of argument Millar is able to bring to bear in his analysis of primitive societies, in order to prove the comparative superiority of his own society and the values he finds operating within it.

Primitive Liberty and Loyalty.

Millar employs an argument based on the assumption of primitive conservatism. But it is also possible for him to argue that "mankind, in the state of mere savages, are in great measure unacquainted with government, and unaccustomed to any sort of constraint, is sufficiently evident."<sup>109</sup> He points

<sup>107</sup> Origin, p. 15.

<sup>108</sup> Origin, p. 16.

<sup>108a</sup> Origin, p. 220.

<sup>109</sup> Origin, p. 241.

out the "in that rude period, when men live by hunting and fishing, they have no opportunity of acquiring any considerable property; and there are no distinctions in the rank of individuals, but those which arise from their personal qualities, either of mind or body."<sup>110</sup> Remembering, then, Millar's dislike, expressed during a passage on opulence, of the lack of stability afforded by a non-propertyed meritocracy, we realize that Millar has introduced another argument which disparages primitive society. For to offset in part the credit which he would normally give to a society encouraging freedom of action, he spends some time in discussing how women in primitive societies "are degraded below the other sex, and reduced under that authority which the strong acquire over the weak; an authority, which, in early periods, is subject to no limitation from the government, and is therefore exerted with a degree of harshness and severity suited to the dispositions of the people."<sup>111</sup> Our discussion of the way in which Millar offsets this credit by arguing that this freedom in primitive societies does not promote considerations of utility, might be recalled. Incidentally, his discussion of the position of primitive women is one of the few cases in which Millar carefully distinguishes significant differences between specific primitive societies, when he writes that "in the Ladrone islands the wife is absolute mistress of the house, and the husband is not at liberty to dispose of any thing without her permission... The North American tribes are accustomed to admit their women into their public councils, and even to allow them the privilege of being first called to give their opinion upon every subject of deliberation..."<sup>112</sup>

This is not, however, by any means, the only instance where Millar gives credit to primitive societies. He observes

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<sup>110</sup>Origin, p. 145.

<sup>111</sup>Origin, p. 34.

<sup>112</sup>Origin, p. 51.

<sup>113</sup>Origin, p. 119.



for example, the filial loyalty of a son "who, in a barbarous age, has been accustomed from his infancy to serve and to obey his father," and who is "in the same manner disposed for the future to continue that service and obedience..."<sup>113</sup> a quality which we have already witnessed in our discussion of Millar's thoughts on progress. Millar further points out with regard to the leader of a primitive community, that the savages, "instead of being mortified by his greatness, they imagine that it reflects honour upon the society to which he belongs, and are even disposed to magnify his prowess with that fond partiality which they entertain in favour of themselves."<sup>114</sup> And he can even say that "the leading men entertain one another with rustic hospitality and magnificence."<sup>115</sup> More generally, however, primitive virtue is seen by Miller as a more negative quality; for instance, he states that the savage's "independence, in that case, is owing to the wretchedness of their circumstances, which afford nothing that can tempt any one man to become subject to another,"<sup>116</sup> or when he writes that "there are indeed but few slaves among the greater part of the savages of America; because, from the situation of that people, they have no opportunity of accumulating wealth for maintaining any number of servants."<sup>117</sup>

His greatest weakness (one carefully avoided for the most part by Ferguson) is a strong tendency to <sup>a</sup>scribe the customs and habits of his own society to <sup>those</sup> ~~that~~ of primitive peoples, even while he questions "the degree of authority which, from the principles of justice and humanity, we are, in any situation, permitted to assume over our fellow-creatures."<sup>118</sup> This ethnocentrism could be carried to ludicrous extremes, for example, when he states that "we may in general conclude, that the same ideas which obtain in a polished nation, with regard to bastards, will, in those primitive times, be extended to all, or the greater part of the children produced in the country."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Origin, p.146.

<sup>115</sup> Origin, p.177.

<sup>116</sup> Origin, p.241.

<sup>117</sup> Origin, p.246.

<sup>118</sup> Origin, p.246.

<sup>119</sup> Origin, p.48.

Or, as another example, when he writes concerning the pursuits of his vision of a primitive justice, that "from the small number of law-suits which occur in the ages of poverty and rudeness, and from the rapidity, with which they are usually determined among a warlike and ignorant people, the office of a judge demands little attention, and occasions no great interruption to those pursuits in which a man of rank and distinction is commonly engaged."<sup>120</sup>

Yet, at other times, he is able to make careful distinctions and comparisons - however inaccurate - between the primitive and polished states of society: "In refined and polished nations there is the same free communication between the sexes as in the ages of rudeness and barbarism. In the latter, women enjoy the most unbounded liberty, because it is thought of no consequence what use they shall make of it. In the former, they are entitled to the same freedom, upon account of those agreeable qualities which they possess, and the rank and dignity which they hold as members of society."<sup>121</sup>

To summarize, we have examined Millar's support of his own society - the one value Millar particularly understood and admired among the primitives -, we have studied some of the arguments by which it is supported, and we have seen how some of these arguments are applied in his evaluations of primitive societies. Further, we have seen some of the range of viewpoints, often conflicting, which Millar brings to bear in vindicating his own culture, and we have observed his ability to alter his logic and even his description of primitive societies within the space of a paragraph in order to establish a normative observation, whatever the logical contradictions implicit in his method. Millar was, of course,

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<sup>120</sup> Origin, p.225.

<sup>121</sup> Origin, p.101.

no more than representative of his age in his tendency to over-assimilate the thinking of primitive societies to that of his own.

We can, however, allow Millar to speak for himself in perhaps his clearest statement of his comparative of primitive and sophisticated societies taken from his essay "Of Justice and Generosity." He writes "in a rude age, where there is little industry, or desire of accumulation, neighboring independent societies are apt to rob and plunder each other; but the members of the same society are attracted by a common interest, and are often strongly united in the bonds of friendship and affection, by mutual exertions of benevolence, or by accidental habits of sympathies."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> John Millar, "Of Justice and Generosity," in W.C. Lehmann, John Millar of Glasgow, (Cambridge, England, 1960), p. 387.

The History of America

## I

Robertson's Format.

We have observed Ferguson writing An Essay on the History of Civil Society, and we have seen how Millar chose a more specific topic in writing on The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks. The field of study in William Robertson's The History of America is even more carefully delimited in its concentration upon "the discovery of the New World," and on "the progress of the Spanish arms and colonies there,"<sup>1</sup> concerning which Robertson observes that "this is not only the most splendid portion of the American story, but so much detached, that it forms a perfect whole by itself, remarkable for the unity of the subject."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, it had been Robertson's original intention to study the entire history of America and not merely the Spanish colonization. And for this reason, his two chapters, or "books", on the British colonization, which were published in 1796 after Robertson's death, by his son, are customarily included in the History. We shall not, however, in the light of the statement quoted above, refer to them in our discussion of the format Robertson chose for the books of the History published during his lifetime, although we may quote them from time to time during the course of our analysis.

The two volumes of the History published during Robertson's lifetime, are each divided into four books which move from the history of European exploration before Columbus, through the story of Columbus, the establishment of the first Spanish colonies, an analysis of the American savage, the Mexican Conquest, the Peruvian conquest, a comparison between the Mexican and Peruvian empires, to a discussion of Spain's administration

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<sup>1</sup>William Robertson, The History of America, 1st ed. (London, 1777), p.vi - hereafter cited as History.

<sup>2</sup>History, I, p.vi.

of her colonies. And in this movement, we may see a general pattern in Robertson's thought - a greater tendency first to present fact and then to analyze it - than we found in the work of Ferguson or Millar.

This same tendency is also evident in the format of Robertson's Book IV, his analysis of the American savage, which will occupy by far the greater part of our attention in the following pages. Furthermore, because so much of Book IV is concerned with the presentation of facts regarding the savage's existence, it would seem appropriate at this point to list the marginal headings affixed to Robertson's work, in order to provide an idea of the comparatively large amount of data which Robertson includes in his study. This would seem particularly appropriate inasmuch as our own analysis will emphasize Robertson's attitudes toward primitive societies rather than the details of his factual knowledge of them.

A synthesis of the marginal headings and table of contents entries concerning Book IV would, then, read as follows:

"View of America when first discovered, and of the manners and policy of its most uncivilized inhabitants - Vast extent of America - Grandeur of the objects it presents to view - Its mountains - rivers - lakes - Its form favourable to commerce - Temperature - predominance of cold - Causes of this - uncultivated - unwholesome - its animals - soil - Inquiry how America was peopled - various theories - what appears most probable - Condition and character of the Americans - All, the Mexicans and Peruvians excepted, in the state of savages - Inquiry confined to the uncivilized tribes - Difficulty of obtaining information - various causes of this - Method observed in the enquiry -

I. The bodily Constitution of the Americans considered - Complexion, etc. - More feeble - less appetite - Less vehemence of desire - Reflections with respect to these - None of them deformed - Uniformity of their appearance - Their state of health - Diseases -

II. The powers and qualities of their minds - Intellectual faculties very limited - No abstract ideas - active efforts of the mind few and languid - Improvident - Some variety with respect to all these -

III. Their domestic state - their social state - Domestic union -



Condition of women - Their women not prolific - Parental affection and filial duty -

IV. Their political state and institutions - Mode of subsistence - By fishing - By hunting - By agriculture - The various fruits of their culture - Their agriculture very limited - Two causes of its imperfection - The want of tame animals - Want of the useful metals - Political institutions arising from this state - Divided into small communities - Unacquainted with the idea of property - High sense of equality and independence - Sense of subordination imperfect - To what people those descriptions apply - Some irregular appearances - Particularly in some of the warmer regions - Among the Natchez - In the islands - In Bogata - Causes of those irregular appearances -

V. Their system of war and public security - Their motives for engaging in war - From the spirit of vengeance - Hence the ferocity of their wars - and their perpetuity - Mode of carrying on war - Not owing to any defect of courage - Incapable of order or discipline - Treatment of prisoners - Their indifference concerning their fate - and fortitude under torture - Sometimes eat their prisoners - Wasted by their perpetual wars - Recruit their numbers by adopting prisoners - Their inferiority in war to polished nations -

VI. The arts with which they were acquainted - Dress and ornaments - Habitations - Their arms - Their domestic utensils - Dressing their food - Construction of their canoes - Little-ness with which they apply to labour -

VII. Their religious ideas and institutions - Their religion - Peculiar difficulties in this inquiry - Confined to two articles - the being of God - Remarkable diversity in their religious notions - System of the Natchez - Their ideas concerning the immortality of the soul - induce them to bury arms, etc. with the dead - Superstition connected with devotion - This department belong [sic] to their physicians - Gradually extends -

VIII. Such singular and detached customs as are not reducible to any of the former heads - Love of dancing - Passion for gaming - and for drinking - Put to death the aged and incurable -

IX. General review and estimate of their virtues and defects - General estimate of their character - Intellectual powers - Political talents - Degree of affection - Hardness of heart - Insensibility - Taciturnity - Cunning - Independent Spirit - Fortitude - Attachment to their community - Satisfaction with their own condition - General caution with respect to this inquiry -"

In summary, Robertson discusses successively the savage environment; bodily constitution, mind; domestic state, political state, system of war, arts (=skills), religious

ideas, and finally evaluates the savage character.

In Robertson's pattern of first recording data and then analyzing and evaluating it, as seen in his format, we may sense a greater tendency to tailor evaluations to suit data than we noticed in either Ferguson or Millar, where we had a greater sense of data being purposely tailored to suit evaluations.

As in the case of our chapters on Ferguson and Millar, it will here be our intention to discuss Robertson's views on the nature of primitive societies in the light of the more general thinking expressed in the History. Like Ferguson, Robertson frequently alludes to his purposes as an author during the course of his writing, but like Millar, he is also frequently seen to modulate between differing points of view. Yet to a greater extent than both of them, as we have just remarked, in the presentation of his writing he appears to select his opinions to qualify his data rather more than selecting his data to support his opinions.

Nevertheless, despite this different stress, for the sake of clarity as well as to facilitate comparisons with our previous chapters we will first discuss some of his more general assumptions concerning his own role as author, the standards by which to evaluate human societies, and the nature of human character and progress, and then some of the differing points of view he utilizes in applying these assumptions. And finally, we will examine more closely his actual evaluations of primitive societies.

#### The Purpose of Historical Writing.

As an historian, Robertson, far more than either Ferguson or Millar, conceives it to be as much to his purpose to convey information as to interpret it, as when he writes that "as the principles and maxims of the Spaniards in planting colonies, which have been adopted in some measure by every nation in Europe, are unfolded in this part of my work; it will serve as a proper introduction to the history of their establishment

in America, and convey such information concerning this important article of policy, as may be deemed no less interesting than curious."<sup>3</sup> And he writes of the pleasure it gives him "to observe and to delineate men at a juncture when their minds are most violently agitated and all their powers and passions are called forth."<sup>4</sup>

Yet he also writes, in a manner resembling Ferguson that "in order to complete the history of the human mind, and attain to a perfect knowledge of its nature and operations, we must contemplate man in all those various situations wherein he has been placed. We must follow him in his progress through the different stages of society, as he gradually advances from the infant state of civil life towards its maturity and decline."<sup>5</sup> But like Millar, he also stresses that "in every inquiry concerning the operations of men when united together in society, the first object of attention should be their mode of subsistence."<sup>6</sup> For he unites these two concerns, the concern with inner character and the concern with outer behavior, by observing that "the arts of rude nations unacquainted with the use of metals, hardly merit any attention on their own account, but are worthy of some notice, as far as they serve to display the genius and manners of a people."<sup>7</sup> (Incidentally, variations of this opinion were also introduced into the writings of other eighteenth-century Scotsmen to support a variety of conclusions as when for example, Macpherson states that "inquiries into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind... The infancy of states and kingdoms is as destitute of great events, as of the means of transmitting them to posterity."<sup>8</sup>) Robertson argues, in a manner suggesting Millar, that an understanding of the genius and manners of a people, at least in the case of the Mexican

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<sup>3</sup>History, I, p.vi.

<sup>4</sup>History, I, p.179.

<sup>5</sup>History, I, pp.281-282.

<sup>6</sup>History, I, p.324.

<sup>7</sup>History, I, p.369.

<sup>8</sup>James Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), p.i.

and Peruvian Empires, "may enable us to ascertain their place in the political scale, to allot them their proper station between the rude tribes in the New World, and the polished states of the ancient, and to determine how far they had risen above the former, as well as how much they fell below the latter."<sup>9</sup>

This hierarchical concern of both Robertson and Millar may well have a theological foundation, in view of the association they both make between "the order and beneficence that really exist in nature."<sup>10</sup> For they may well both feel that in order to prove divine beneficence, it is necessary to establish such a hierarchy. Certainly, Ferguson is concerned that his observations support the Scriptures, when he writes that "we know, with infallible certainty, that all the human race spring from the same source, and that the descendants of one man, under the protection as well as in obedience to the command of Heaven, multiplied and replenished the earth,"<sup>11</sup> or when he writes that "as long as hunting continues to be the chief employment of man to which he trusts for subsistence, he can hardly be said to have occupied the earth."<sup>12</sup> And elsewhere he observed that "there is no employment more delightful to a devout mind than the contemplation of the divine wisdom in the government of this world. The civil history of mankind opens a wide field for this pious exercise."<sup>13</sup> Such concern was evidently common among eighteenth century Scottish writers, for we have seen that Ferguson too, felt it important to show that the hand of God could be seen wherever true progress was realized. That

<sup>9</sup> History, II, pp. 269-270.

<sup>10</sup> History, II, p. 309.

<sup>11</sup> History, I, p. 265.

<sup>12</sup> History, I, p. 337.

<sup>13</sup> William Robertson, The situation of the world at the time of Christ's appearance, and its connection with the success of his religion; considered (1818), p. 1, cited by D. B. Horn, "Principal William Robertson, D.D., Historian," reprinted from the University of Edinburgh Journal (Autumn 1956), p. 158.

this concern often produced tensions in the work of Scottish writers, we can see in the statement of Kames, that "though we cannot doubt of the authority of Moses, yet his account of the creation of man is not a little puzzling."<sup>14</sup>

## II

### Utilization of Sources.

Like Ferguson, Robertson expresses his concern that writers make proper use of their sources, and he observes that "Almost two centuries elapsed after the discovery of America, before the manners of its inhabitants attracted, in any considerable degree, the attention of philosophers... but instead of throwing any light upon the subject, they have contributed, in some degree, to involve it in additional obscurity."<sup>15</sup> For example, he mentions writers who have concentrated on finding intimations of Christian dogma in pagan beliefs,<sup>16</sup> and writers who have attributed the Americans' forbearance under torture to insensitive nerves rather than to strong conviction.<sup>17</sup> Like Ferguson, he suggests that Rousseau is absurd to recommend savages as models for civilized man. But unlike Ferguson, he also gently criticizes Montesquieu and comments "the passion of that great man for system, sometimes rendered him inactive to research; and from his capacity to refine, he was apt, in some instances, to overlook obvious and just causes."<sup>18</sup> In this connection, we have already observed Robertson's greater tendency to record research as well as Ferguson's greater inclination to systematize.

Robertson is at great pains to defend himself from similar criticisms, which, ironically, Southey was to utter in 1810 when he stated that the History was "guilty of such

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<sup>14</sup> Lord Kames, Sketches of the History of Man, I, p.76, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934), p.279.

<sup>15</sup> History, I, p.286.

<sup>17</sup> History, I, p.365.

<sup>16</sup> History, I, p.380.

<sup>18</sup> History, I, p.287.



omissions, and consequent misrepresentations as to make it certain, either that he had not read some of the most important documents to which he refers, or that he did not chose to notice the facts which are to be found there, because they were not in conformity to his own preconceived opinions."<sup>19</sup> Robertson attempts to forestall such criticism by suggesting, for example, "as the view which I have given of rude nations is extremely different from that exhibited by very respectable authors, it may be proper to produce some of the many authorities on which I found my description [of American savages as being slothful]."<sup>20</sup> However, to support this view, he cites passages on the Indians which observe that "nothing disturbs the tranquillity of their souls, equally insensible to disasters and prosperity..."<sup>21</sup> Whereas Robertson and Millar might regard such a characteristic as a slothful fault, Ferguson, for example, would see it as a stoical perfection and might well criticize Robertson's position. Ferguson is perhaps more open to criticism, however, when on the one hand he can argue that "the philosophers and historians of ancient Greece and Rome...had hardly any opportunity of surveying man in his rudest and most early state... The Scythians and Germans, the rudest people of whom any ancient author has transmitted to us an authentic account, possessed flocks and herds, had acquired property of various kinds, and, when compared with mankind in their primitive state, may be reckoned to have attained to a great degree of civilization;"<sup>22</sup> while on the other hand, to prove a different point, he can cite Tacitus in his descriptions of the Germans, as "an author who had a good opportunity of observing the principle which leads savages

<sup>19</sup> Robert Southey, History of Brazil, I (London, 1810), p.639, cited by D.B.Horn, "Principal Williams Robertson, D.D., Historian," reprinted from the University of Edinburgh Journal (Autumn 1956), p.163.

<sup>20</sup> History, II, note lxix, p.492. <sup>21</sup> History, I note 1, p.465.

<sup>22</sup> History, I, p. 282.

neither to express any gratitude for favours which they had received, nor to expect any return for such as they bestowed."<sup>23</sup> For, in the contradiction between these passages, he would appear to be applying a shifting perspective, like Millar's, to support intellectual principles which <sup>reconcile</sup> unify the observable contradiction, the very ~~approach~~ he criticized in Montesquieu. Such conflicting passages are, however, the exception in Robertson's work.

#### Priorities of Consideration.

Instead of attempting to support such preconceived principles Robertson declares, "I have ventured to enquire, but without presuming to decide. Satisfied with offering conjectures, I pretend not to establish any system. When an investigation is, from its nature so intricate and obscure, that it is impossible to arrive at conclusions which are certain, there may be some merit in pointing out such as are probable."<sup>24</sup> And, just as Ferguson pointed out the difficulties and impossibilities of obtaining various types of certainty, Robertson, too, points out that "the operations of men are so complex, that we must not attribute the form which they assume to the force of a single principle or cause,"<sup>25</sup> and he warns that "in inquiries concerning either the bodily or mental qualities of particular races of men, there is not a more common or more seducing error, than that of ascribing to a single cause, those characteristic peculiarities, which are the effect of a combined operation of many causes..."<sup>26</sup> Yet despite the importance he attaches to analyzing causes in detail, he is also able to argue with regard to data that "to follow travellers in [certain].. minute circumstances of their

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<sup>23</sup>History, I, p.487.

<sup>24</sup>History, I, p.281.

<sup>25</sup>History, I, p.347.

<sup>26</sup>History, I, p.293.

description, is not only beneath the dignity of history, but would be foreign to the object of my researches."<sup>27</sup>

But despite Robertson's disclaimer of systems, it is impossible for him to write without preconceptions of one sort or another, and it is equally impossible for these preconceptions not to prejudice his History to a certain degree. For example, his conviction that "without indulging conjecture, or betraying a propensity to either system [of extreme admiration or extreme contempt for primitive societies], we must study with equal care to avoid the extremes of extravagant admiration, or of supercilious contempt for those manners which we describe,"<sup>28</sup> is itself a strong prejudice which obliges him to attempt to balance every statement of admiration with one of disapproval, and vice versa. Occasionally, these balances make the reader somewhat uncomfortable because they seem to have been dogmatically sought after, but they also insist that the reader form his own evaluations in a way that Ferguson and Millar never suggest.

The order in which Robertson presents his material must also constitute an important bias in his work, and so must the material he chooses to present. In his insistence, for example, that "man existed as an individual before he became the member of a community"<sup>29</sup> and that "after viewing the bodily constitution of the Americans, and contemplating the powers of their minds, we are led, in the natural order of inquiry, to consider them as united together in society,"<sup>30</sup> he is departing significantly from one of Ferguson's most important assumptions, that man is in the first analysis a member of society.

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<sup>27</sup> History, I, p.373.

<sup>28</sup> History, I, p.288.

<sup>29</sup> History, I, p.288.

<sup>30</sup> History, I, p.317.

Insights Derived from the Study of Language.

Robertson's determination to gain an exact knowledge of a society in order to establish its hierarchical position among other societies, his concern that sources be both correctly understood and properly utilized, and his fear of the bias of a pre-conceived system are all reflected in his strong interest in the interplay between language and thought - an interest not displayed to the same extent by either Ferguson or Millar.

This interest manifests itself explicitly when he states that "there is not a more frequent or a more fertile source of deception in describing the manners and arts of savage nations, or of such as are imperfectly civilized than that of applying to them the names and phrases appropriated to the institutions and refinements of polished life. When the leader of a small tribe, or the head of a rude community, is dignified with the title of king or emperor, the place of his residence can receive no other name but that of his palace; and whatever his attendants may be, they must be called his court. Under such appellations they acquire an importance and dignity which does not belong to them. The illusion spreads, and giving a false colour to every part of the narrative, the imagination is so much carried away with the resemblance, that it becomes difficult to discern objects as they really are."<sup>31</sup> And such a concern is of course implied throughout the course of his writing. In fact, he is at pains to defend himself from charges that he committed this deception in his notes in later editions.<sup>32</sup>

This concern with the problems of ethnocentrism was also reflected in the work of Ferguson, as we have seen. However, Robertson's linguistic interest went far beyond such considerations. For when Robertson writes that "men at a distance from the objects of useful knowledge, untouched by the motives that animate an

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<sup>31</sup>History, II, p.299.

<sup>32</sup>William Robertson, The History of America, 6, ed.Dugald Stewart (1788), note xxvii, p.419.

active and a vigorous mind, could produce only the jargon of a technical language, and accumulate the impertinence of academical forms."<sup>33</sup> he is discussing the very nature of the relationship between perception and its linguistic analogues, a discussion which comes up again when he writes of the Mexicans, that "this respect due from inferiors to those above them in rank, was established with such ceremonious accuracy, that it incorporated with their language and influenced its genius and idiom."<sup>34</sup>

This close relationship between language and perception is furthermore used by Robertson to ascertain the state of development of different societies, as when he writes that "the range of.. [the American savage's].. understanding must, of course, be very confined, and his reasoning powers be employed merely on what is sensible. This is so remarkably the case with the ruder nations of America, that their languages, (as we shall afterwards find) have not a word to express anything but what is material or corporal.

Time, space, substance, and a thousand other terms which represent abstract and universal ideas, are altogether unknown to them."<sup>35</sup> He uses this relationship to establish single facts as when he observes that American Indians seem "to be everywhere exempt from many of the maladies, which are the immediate offspring of luxury, or sloth... and they have no names in their languages by which to distinguish this numerous train of adventitious evils."<sup>36</sup> But he also points out certain Mexican words as demonstrating a "near approach to philosophical accuracy" which "is a remarkable proof that the Mexicans had bestowed some attention upon inquiries and speculations, to which men in a very rude state never turn

<sup>33</sup> History, I, p.178.  
<sup>34</sup> History, II, p.278.

<sup>35</sup> History, I, p.312.  
<sup>36</sup> History, I, p.306.



their thoughts."<sup>37</sup> Through this weighing of the deficiencies and sophistications of its language, Robertson is better able to place a society in his hierarchical model.

Such linguistic concern may not appear to any great extent in Ferguson and Millar, but it was widespread among other Scottish writers of the period. For example, Blair writes that "it deserves particular notice, as one of the most genuine and decisive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms or abstract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Ossian's works." And he adds that "the personifications which are so familiar to later poets of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the rest of that class, were unknown to our Celtic bard. These were modes of conception too abstract for his age."<sup>37a</sup> Blair uses this innocence in support of Ossian's poetry. But Dugald Stewart, for example, sharing the same concern and making essentially the same observations of Blair, evaluates those observations quite differently from Blair, when he writes that the eloquence of savages "is the natural offspring of passion impatient to give vent to its feeling, and struggling with the restraints of a scanty vocabulary; and it implies none of those inventive powers which are displayed in the creation of characters, of situations, of events, of ideal scenery; - none of the powers, in short, which form the distinguishing attributes of Poetical Genius."<sup>38</sup> Stewart also refers to "that systematical beauty which we admire in the structure of a cultivated language."<sup>39</sup> And his contemporary, John Gregory, goes beyond Stewart, and even Robertson, in suggesting that not only do modes of perception influence and manifest themselves in a language but that conversely, the limitations of a language may also influence and manifest themselves in modes of perception,

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<sup>37</sup> History, II, pp.289-290.

<sup>37a</sup> Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), p.19.

<sup>38</sup> Dugald Stewart, On the Culture..., 10, p.398-401, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists: Some Reconsiderations," in ELH, 12 (1945), p.219.

<sup>39</sup> Dugald Stewart, Collected Works (Edinburgh 1854) 10. pp.32-35, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations," in ELH 12 (1945), p.205.

when he writes that "the wants of Nature, likewise, being few and easily supplied, require but little of the assistance of ingenuity; tho' what most effectually retards the progress of knowledge, is the difficulty of communicating it from one person to another."<sup>40</sup>

### III

#### Commerce and Social Union.

We have seen that Robertson considers philosophical accuracy, and its reflection in language, to be one of the hallmarks of Mexican civilization. Among other signs of the Aztec's civilized development, he mentions the Mexican system of commerce and argues that "such orderly intercourse" characterizes "an improved state of society,"<sup>41</sup> referring also to "that exchange of commodities which contributes so much towards the comfort of life."<sup>42</sup> Thus, he argues that commercial development may be seen as another of the criteria which Robertson applies in determining a society's hierarchical ranking.

Robertson stresses the positive value of this criterion in a way reminiscent of Millar, when he writes that "in polished societies, where the means of substance are secured with certainty, and acquired with ease; where the talents of the mind are often of more importance than the powers of the body; children are preserved notwithstanding their defects or deformity, and grow up to be useful citizens."<sup>43</sup> Yet he also argues the positive value of such development in terms which Ferguson would have more readily supported, when he writes that "in proportion as mankind combine in social union, and live under the influence of equal laws and regular policy, their manners soften, sentiments of humanity arise, and the

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<sup>40</sup> John Gregory, *Comparative View*, vii-x, cited by R.H. Pearce, "The Eighteenth-century Scottish Primitivists; Some Reconsiderations, in *ELH* 12 (1945), p.209.

<sup>41</sup> *History*, II, p.277.

<sup>42</sup> *History*, II, p.295.

<sup>43</sup> *History*, I, p.298.

rights of the species come to be understood. The fierceness of war abates, and even while engaged in hostility, men remember what they owe to one another."<sup>44</sup> He unites Millar's major criticism of primitive societies with Ferguson's major criticism of his own society, when he observes that among the savages, "the pride of independence produces almost the same effects with interestedness in a more advanced state of society," which he elaborates in pointing out that this pride "refers every thing to a man himself, and renders the gratification of his own wishes the measure and end of conduct."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it is in this emphasis upon the welfare of the entire community as a concern more important than the welfare of the individual (except as a part of that community) that Ferguson, Millar, and Robertson may, with unusual clarity, be seen to stand together.

Robertson's strongest praise of commerce in relation to its promotion of social union is, incidentally, to be found in The History of Charles V, where he writes that "commerce tends to wear off those prejudices which maintain distinction and animosity between nations. It softens and polishes the manners of men. It unites them by one of the strongest of all ties, the desire of supplying their mutual wants. It disposes them to peace, by establishing in every state an order of citizens bound by their interest to be the guardians of public tranquillity. As soon as the commercial spirit acquires vigour, and begins to gain an ascendent in any society, we discover a new genius in its policy, its alliances, its wars, and its negotiations. In proportion as commerce made its way into the different countries of Europe, they successively turned their attention to those objects, and adopted those manners which occupy and distinguish polished nations."<sup>46</sup>

Private Property and Social Distinctions.

Among the hallmarks of increasing civilization, Robertson

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<sup>44</sup> History, II, p.291.

<sup>45</sup> History, I, p.405.

<sup>46</sup> William Robertson, The History of Charles V, III, p. 77.

includes the presence of private property and social distinctions. For he observes that "in proportion as refinement spreads, the distinction of possessions [sic] increases, and they branch out into more numerous and minute subdivisions."<sup>47</sup> And in deriding the primitive Americans, while making another linguistic analysis, he notes that among them "the distinctions arising from the inequality of possessions are unknown. The terms rich and poor enter not into their language, and being strangers to property, they are unacquainted with that, which is the great object of law and policy, as well as the chief motive which induced mankind to establish the various arrangements of regular government."<sup>48</sup>

Like Ferguson, and even Millar, he is aware that "interest" may also be "a source of discord."<sup>49</sup> He records that "among the Mexicans.. the great body of the people were in a most humiliating state... Even those considered as freemen were treated by their haughty lords as beings of an inferior species... Thus the distinction of ranks was completely established, in a line of regular subordination reaching from the highest to the lowest member of the community."<sup>50</sup> In his own society, he observes that romantic love "applies only to those who, by their situation, are exempted from the cares and labours of life. Among persons of inferior order, who are doomed by their condition to incessant toil, the dominion of this passion is less violent; their solicitude to procure subsistence, and to provide for the first demand of nature, leaves little leisure for attending to its second call."<sup>51</sup> Macpherson, incidentally, makes the additional point that "when property is established, the human mind confines its views to the pleasure it procures. It does not go back to

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<sup>47</sup>History, II, p.276.

<sup>48</sup>History, I, p.338.

<sup>49</sup>History, I, p.350.

<sup>50</sup>History, II, pp.277-278.

<sup>51</sup>History, I, p.295.

antiquity, or look forward to succeeding ages. The cares of life increase, and the actions of other times no longer amuse..<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, with reference to the Mexicans, Robertson is also able to observe that "it is only in societies, which time and the institution of regular government have moulded into form, that we find such an orderly arrangement of men into different ranks, and such nice attention paid to their various rights."<sup>53</sup> And he approvingly notes that "as among the Mexicans the distinction of ranks was established, and property was unequally divided, the number of distinguished structures in their towns would of course be greater than in other parts of America."<sup>54</sup> His contempt for "the uninformed vulgar"<sup>55</sup>, comes up on more than one occasion in his work.<sup>56</sup> He observes that "wherever the idea of property is not established, there can be no distinction among men, but what arises from personal qualities,"<sup>57</sup> a concept which, like Millar, he opposes. And also like Millar, he remarks that "where the right of separate and exclusive possession is not introduced, the great object of law and jurisdiction does not exist,"<sup>58</sup> noting as a corollary that "where the idea of private property is unknown, and no criminal jurisdiction is established, there is hardly any function of internal government to exercise."<sup>59</sup>

#### Propertied Communes.

It is perhaps of particular interest to note that these two themes of "Commerce and Social Union" and "Private Property and Social Distinctions" are joined, with Robertson's approval, in a form of propertied communes pertaining to the Aztec empire which he describes in these terms: "in every district a certain quantity of land was measured out, in proportion to the number of families. This was cultivated

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<sup>52</sup>James Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. of the Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal," in Ossian's Poems (London, 1763), p.xv.

<sup>53</sup>History, II, p.279.

<sup>56</sup>History, I, p.49.

<sup>54</sup>History, II, p.298.

<sup>57</sup>History, I, p.339.

<sup>55</sup>History, I, p.23.

<sup>58</sup>History, I, p.340.

<sup>59</sup>History, I, p.403.



by the joint labour of the whole; its produce was deposited in a common storehouse, and divided among them according to their respective exigencies. The members of the Calpullee, or associations, could not alienate their share of the common estate; it was an indivisible permanent property, destined for the support of their families. In consequence of this distribution of the territory of the state, every man had an interest in its welfare, and the happiness of the individual was connected with the public security."<sup>60</sup>

Robertson approvingly describes a similar system with reference to the Incas in Peru, "the third and largest share [of lands capable of cultivation] was reserved for the maintenance of the people, among whom it was parcelled out. No person, however, had a right of exclusive property in the portion allotted to him. He possessed it only for a year, at the expiration of which a new division was made in proportion to the rank, the number, and exigencies of each family. All those lands were cultivated by the joint industry of the community. The people, summoned by a proper officer, repaired in a body to the fields, and performed their common task, while songs and musical instruments cheered them to their labour. By this singular distribution of territory, as well as by the mode of cultivating it, the idea of a common interest and of mutual subserviency was continually inculcated. Each individual felt his connection with those around him, and knew that he depended on their friendly aid for what increase he was to reap. A state thus constituted may be considered as one great family, in which the union of members was so complete, and the exchange of good offices so perceptible, as to create stronger attachment, and to bind man to man in closer intercourse, than subsisted under any form of society established in America."<sup>61</sup>

Yet when Robertson speaks of a slightly different form of commune attempted by the British colonists, he remarks that "a society, destitute of the first advantage resulting from social union [the advantage referred to is private property],

<sup>60</sup> History, II, p.274.

<sup>61</sup> History, II, pp. 312-313.

was not formed to prosper. Industry, when not excited by the idea of property in what was acquired by its own efforts, made no vigorous exertion. . The idle and improvident trusted entirely to what was issued from the common store."<sup>62</sup> And we are led to conclude that either Robertson laid exceptionally heavy stress upon the forms of private property being preserved, or that again like Millar he is changing a viewpoint as he adapts himself to a different context, or that perhaps the authenticity of his posthumously published third volume bears investigation.

#### Climatic and Physiological Determinants.

Like Ferguson and Millar, Robertson discusses the forces of environment which influence the hierarchical position of a society - which we have seen is partially determined, according to Robertson by the development of philosophical and linguistic accuracy, commerce, social union, private property, and social distinctions.

Like Ferguson and Millar, he weighs at length Montesquieu's arguments concerning climatic determinants,<sup>63</sup> at one time observing that "in every part of the earth where man exists, the power of climate operates, with decisive influence, upon his condition and character,"<sup>64</sup> and at another time noting that "under very different climates, when nations are in a similar state of society, their institutions and civil government assume the same form."<sup>65</sup> He remarks that the "powerful operation of climate is felt most sensibly by rude nations, and produces greater effects than in societies more highly polished,"<sup>66</sup> which he explains at one time by stating that "it is... observed, that in those countries of America, where, from the fertility of the soil, the mildness of the

<sup>62</sup> History, III (London, 1796), p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> History, I, p. 343.

<sup>64</sup> History, I, p. 414.

<sup>65</sup> History, I, note lxii, p. 476.

<sup>66</sup> History, I, p. 415.

climate or some farther advances which the natives have made in improvement, the means of substance are more abundant, and the hardships of savage life are less severely felt, the animal passion of the sexes becomes more ardent,"<sup>67</sup> though at another time he records that "hardly any region of the earth furnishes man spontaneously with what his wants require."<sup>68</sup> In any event, it is his usual observation that "the improvident savage... like a plant, or an animal,... is formed by the climate under which he is placed, and feels the full force of its influence,"<sup>69</sup> an analogy which reminds us of Ferguson.

Like Ferguson and Millar, Robertson also takes up the subject of physiological determinants, when he writes that "the uncultivated state of the New World affected not only the temperature of the air, but the qualities of its productions. The principle of life seems to have been less active and vigorous there, than in the ancient continent."<sup>70</sup> And he observes that "the natives of the American islands were of a more feeble constitution than the inhabitants of the other hemisphere. They could neither perform the same work, nor endure the same fatigue, with men whose organs were of a more vigorous conformation. The listless indolence in which they delighted to pass their days, as it was the effect of their debility, continued likewise to increase it, and rendered them, from habit, as well as constitution, incapable of hard labour."<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, Robertson succeeds in linking climatic and physiological determinants, when he observes that "in a more simple state, where the demands of men are so few and so moderate, that they may be gratified almost without any effort, by the spontaneous productions of nature, the powers of the body are not called forth, nor can they attain their proper strength."<sup>72</sup>

#### Cultural Determinants.

In addition to climatic and physiological determinants, Robertson points out that "moral and political causes... affect the

<sup>67</sup>History, I, p.296.

<sup>68</sup>History, I, p.328.

<sup>69</sup>History, I, p.415.

<sup>70</sup>History, I, p.259.

<sup>71</sup>History, I, pp.100-101.

<sup>72</sup>History, I, p.294.

disposition and character of individuals as well as nations, still more powerfully than the influence of climate."<sup>73</sup> For he writes that "at his first appearance in the state of infancy, whether it be among the rudest savages, or in the most civilized society, we can discern no quality which marks any distinction or superiority. The capacity for improvement seems to be the same; and the talents he may afterwards acquire, as well as the virtues he may be rendered capable of exercising, depend entirely upon the state of society in which he is placed. To this state his mind naturally accommodates itself, and from it receives its discipline and culture..."<sup>74</sup> In this way, Robertson argues, "the disposition and manners of men are formed by their situation, and arise from the state of society in which they live. The moment that begins to vary, the character of a people must change. In proportion as it advances in improvement, their manners refine, their powers and talents are called forth."<sup>75</sup>

Robertson combines these various determinants in his description of the Peruvians, when he observes that "the unwarlike spirit of the Peruvians was the most remarkable as well as most fatal defect in their character... The influence, perhaps, of those institutions which rendered their manners gentle, gave their minds this unmanly softness; perhaps, the constant serenity and mildness of the climate may have enervated the vigour of their frame; perhaps, some principle in their government, unknown to us, was the occasion of this political debility. Whatever may have been the cause, the fact is certain, and there is not an instance in history of any people so little advanced in refinement, so totally destitute of military talents and enterprize. This character hath descended to their posterity. The Indians of Peru are now more tame and depressed than any people of America. Their feeble spirits, relaxed in lifeless inaction, seem hardly

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<sup>73</sup>History, I, p.417.

<sup>74</sup>History, I, pp.401-402.

<sup>75</sup>History, I, p.268.

capable of any bold or manly exertion."<sup>76</sup>

Progress.

It would seem appropriate, now, in the light of these arguments, to examine Robertson's views on the nature of progress, for like Millar, he stresses that "whether man has been improved by the progress of arts and civilization in society, is a question which, in the wantonness of disputation, has been agitated among philosophers. That women are indebted to the refinements of polished manners for a happy change in their state, is a point which can admit of no doubt."<sup>77</sup> As we have seen, Robertson speculates not only that progress is an indisputably real phenomenon but that it is also generally motivated by "the order and beneficence that really exist in nature."<sup>78</sup>

During the course of the History, this motivating force is characterized in a variety of ways. In a manner reminiscent rather more of Millar than of Ferguson, he speaks optimistically of the destiny of a man's inner character; "man cannot continue long in..(the primitive).. state of feeble and uninformed infancy. He was made for industry and action, and the powers of his nature, as well as the necessity of his condition, urge him to fulfil his destiny."<sup>79</sup> But to an even greater extent than Millar, he refers to forces beyond the destiny of individuals, for example, "the genius of the age" favoring "the execution of that new undertaking, to which the peculiar state of the country invited the Portuguese."<sup>80</sup> Or, in a similar vein, he may record that "at length the period arrived, when Providence decreed that men were to pass the limits within which they had been so long confined, and open to themselves a more ample field wherein to display their talents, their enterprise, and courage."<sup>81</sup> Related to this concept of Providence, is his reference to "Time", which "must have augmented the wants of men, and ripened their ingenuity, before the productions of art become so complicated in their structure, or so curious in their fabric,

<sup>76</sup>History, II, pp.324-325.

<sup>77</sup>History, I, pp.318-319.

<sup>78</sup>History, II, p.309.

<sup>79</sup>History, I, pp.315-316.

<sup>80</sup>History, I, p.42.

<sup>81</sup>History, I, p.38.



that a particular course of education is requisite toward forming the artificer to expertness in contrivance and workmanship."<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, in connection with these various abstract entities, it is remarkable to note how infrequently Robertson explicitly cites the will of God as a motivating power, although, as we have shown, Scriptural considerations were frequently on his mind.

We have seen that Ferguson argued that the forces which change human society are not only unknowable but irrational. Robertson, however, like Millar, implies that logical cause and effect relationships do exist and may be perceived, although, he also argues that probability rather than certainty is often the most an historian may be able to establish. For Robertson points out that "if we examine into the motives which rouse men to activity in civilized life, and prompt them to persevere in fatiguing exertions of their ingenuity or strength, we shall find that they arise chiefly from acquired wants and appetites."<sup>83</sup> And he develops this by observing that "wherever the state of society is such as to create many wants and desires, which cannot be satisfied without regular exertions of industry, the body accustomed to labour becomes robust and patient of fatigue."<sup>84</sup> Furthermore in The History of Charles V, Robertson, like Millar, also remarks that the progress of a society is advanced by a comparative awareness within that society of the progress attained by other societies. For he writes that "the wants of men, in the original and most simple state of society are so few, and their desires so limited, that they rest contented with the natural productions of their climate and soil, or with what they can add to these by their own rude industry. They have not superfluities to dispose of, and few necessities that demand a supply. Every little community subsisting on its own domestic stock, and satisfied with it, is

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<sup>82</sup> History, II, p.276.

<sup>83</sup> History, I, p.314.

<sup>84</sup> History, I, pp. 293-294.

either little acquainted with the states around it or at variance with them, Society and manners must be considerably improved, and many provisions must be made for public order and public security, before a liberal intercourse can take place between different nations."<sup>85</sup>

In these ways, then, as we have seen in his references to the Mexican Indians, Robertson believes that it is by "time and the institution of regular government" that societies have been "moulded into form."<sup>86</sup>

Universal Characteristics of Human Nature.

Robertson's view on the forces which produce progress - like the beliefs of Ferguson and Millar - assumes that all men exhibit certain characteristics. For he shares with Ferguson and Millar the view that "in every part of the earth the progress of man hath been nearly the same, and we can trace him in his career from the rude simplicity of savage life, until he attains the industry, the arts, and the elegance of polished society."<sup>87</sup> As we have seen, this similarity is explained by Robertson when he notes that "as human being, as he comes originally from the hand of nature, is everywhere the same,"<sup>88</sup> a belief which was also stressed by Ferguson. But unlike Ferguson, Robertson also shares Millar's belief that the inner character of a man actually appears to change during the course of human progress, when he writes that "in proportion to the wants which... [character]... accustoms a human being to feel, and the functions in which these engage him, his intellectual powers are called forth. According to the connections which it establishes between him and the rest of his species, the affections of his heart are exerted. It is only by attending to this great principle, that we can discover what is the character of man in every different

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<sup>85</sup>William Robertson, The History of Charles V, III, pp. 72-73.

<sup>86</sup>History, II, p.279.

<sup>87</sup>History, I, p.268.

<sup>88</sup>History, I, p.401.

period of his progress."<sup>89</sup> These two beliefs may be reconciled by remembering that Robertson like Ferguson and Millar, believes that a man's inner nature continues to be molded, after he is born, by the society in which he finds himself, But whereas Ferguson placed almost all his emphasis upon those inner traits which could be realized in all men, and Millar stressed particularly the difference between the actual realization of these traits among different peoples, Robertson is careful to keep both points of view before him.

In order to explain the changes which take place in man's character during the course of progress, as well as in order to account for his constant traits, Robertson frequently employs the metaphor of infancy, when, for example, he writes that "as the individual advances from the ignorance and imbecility of the infant state, to vigour and maturity of understanding, something similar to this may be observed in the progress of the species. With respect to it, too, there is a period of infancy, during which several powers of the mind are not unfolded, and all are feeble and defective in their operation..."<sup>90</sup> And thus he notes that in the Americas "we behold communities just beginning to unite, and may examine the sentiments and actions of human beings in the infancy of social life, while they feel but imperfectly the force of its ties, and have scarcely relinquished their native liberty."<sup>91</sup> That this was a common metaphor among eighteenth-century Scottish writers may be seen in Blair's statement with reference to Ossianic Britain, that "the progress of the world in this respect resembles the progress of age in man. The powers of imagination are most vigorous and predominant in youth; those of the understanding ripen more slowly, and often attain not their maturity, till the imagination begin to flag."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> History, I, p.402.

<sup>90</sup> History, I, p.308.

<sup>91</sup> History, I, p.282.

<sup>92</sup> Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal" prefaced to Ossian's Poems, (London 1763), Edinburgh University Library, p.3.

Robertson frequently uses this metaphor to explain an assumption which he shared with Ferguson and Millar, that "the qualities belonging to the people of all the different tribes have such a near resemblance, that they may be painted with the same features. Where any circumstances seem to constitute a diversity in their character and manners worthy of attention, it will be sufficient to point these out as they occur, and to inquire into the cause of such peculiarities."<sup>93</sup> Blair, too, was merely extending this assumption when he wrote that "what we have been long accustomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, because some of the earliest poetical productions have come to us from the East, is probably no more oriental than occidental; it is characteristical of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations of a certain period."<sup>94</sup>

Robertson substantiates this likeness by observing that "the perfect similarity of manners among savage nations facilitates and completes the...[adoption of captured enemy warriors into primitive American tribes]..., and induces a captive to transfer not only his allegiance, but his affection, to the community into the bosom of which he is received."<sup>95</sup> And he frequently refers to various specific characteristics which he claims all American savages have in common, including the assertion of tribal property claims,<sup>96</sup> the slaughter of the ill and aged,<sup>97</sup> the similarity of various primitive superstitions,<sup>98</sup> and the belief in the immortality of the soul.<sup>99</sup> However, he also argues that there is an important distinction to be made between American and other savages, when he writes that "though the perils and hardships of the savage state, though excessive fatigue, on some occasions, and the difficulty at all times of procuring subsistence, may seem to be adverse to this passion (sex), and to have a tendency to abate this vigour, yet the rudest nations of every other part of the globe seem to feel its influence more powerfully

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<sup>93</sup>History, I, p.283.

<sup>94</sup>Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal" prefaced to Ossian's Poems, (London, 1763), Edinburgh University Library, p.4.

<sup>95</sup>History, I, p.368.      <sup>96</sup>History, I, p.349.      <sup>97</sup>History, I, p.400.

<sup>98</sup>History, I, p.384.      <sup>99</sup>History, I, p.387.

than the inhabitants of the New World."<sup>100</sup> Conversely, he observes that whereas the Tahitians "far excel most of the Americans in the knowledge of and practice of the arts of ingenuity,... yet they had not invented any method of boiling water, and having no vessel that would bear the fire, they had no more idea that water could be made hot, than that it could be made solid."<sup>101</sup>

Incidentally, from this last observation concerning the Tahitians, it might appear that Robertson had reason to doubt the general eighteenth century Scottish assumption, which we have discussed, that the steps of progress are uniform. However, when he also observes that "the manners of the people in the New World who had made the greatest progress in the arts of policy, were the most ferocious, and the barbarity of some of their customs exceeded even those of the savage state,"<sup>102</sup> he is careful to point out that this violation of the general assumption is "an effect that is singular in the history of the human species."<sup>103</sup>

#### Primitive Indolence.

We have now discussed some of the assumptions and attitudes underlying Robertson's position as the author of the History, and we have analyzed some of the principal values which tend to concern him when he examines primitive societies. In the first subdivision of this chapter, we indicated the degree of detail and systematization with which Robertson recounted his observations. It would now seem appropriate to examine in greater detail two particular aspects of savage life which continue to occupy his attention throughout much of the course of the History. The first of these is primitive indolence.

Robertson argues that the indolence of American savages is seen at all times except when they are at war or hunting,<sup>104</sup> hunting or fishing,<sup>105</sup> gaming,<sup>106</sup> drinking,<sup>107</sup> or "rouzed by the

<sup>100</sup>History, I, p.292.

<sup>102</sup>History, II, p.303.

<sup>105</sup>History, I, p.314.

<sup>101</sup>History, I, note lxxi, p.483.

<sup>103</sup>History, II, p.303.

<sup>104</sup>History, I, pp.376, 398.

<sup>106</sup>History, I, p.396.

<sup>107</sup>History, I, p.399.



jollity of the festival and dance."<sup>108</sup> But on these occasions they are found to be gay and conversable,<sup>109</sup> frolicsome,<sup>110</sup> "rapacious, impatient, noisy, and almost frantic with eagerness."<sup>111</sup>

He argues that the indolence of the primitive Americans may be seen in their failure "to open or improve a country, possessing almost every advantage of situation and climate,"<sup>112</sup> and he further describes the New World as a territory where "the state of mankind was ruder [than in the Old World], and the aspect of nature extremely different. Throughout all its vast regions, there were only two monarchies remarkable for extent of territory, or distinguished by any progress in improvement. The rest of this continent was possessed by small independent tribes, destitute of arts and industry, and neither capable to correct the defects, nor desirous to meliorate the condition of that part of the earth allotted to them for their habitation."<sup>113</sup>

He points out that the natives are delighted with their indolent security,<sup>114</sup> concerned with their personal dignity and military character and indifferent to a peaceable and inactive life.<sup>115</sup>

He attempts to account for this indifference climatically, pointing out that where "the desires of simple nature are few, and where a favourable climate yields almost spontaneously what suffices.. [the savages]..., they scarcely stir the soul, or excite any violent emotion. Hence the people of several tribes in America waste their life in a listless indolence."<sup>116</sup> And he adds later on that "in the warmer regions, men are more feeble in their frame, less vigorous in the efforts of their minds, of a gentle but dastardly spirit, more enslaved by pleasure and sunk in indolence."<sup>117</sup>

But he also accounts for it in terms of societal determinants, when he points out that "men, accustomed to the free and

<sup>108</sup> History, I, p.408.

<sup>109</sup> History, I, p.408.

<sup>110</sup> History, I, p.399.

<sup>111</sup> History, I, p.396.

<sup>112</sup> History, I, p.257.

<sup>113</sup> History, I, p.257.

<sup>114</sup> History, I, p.412.

<sup>115</sup> History, I, p.372.

<sup>116</sup> History, I, p.314.

<sup>117</sup> History, I, p.416.

vagrant life of hunters, are incapable of regular application to labour."<sup>118</sup> He also accounts for it with another economic argument, observing that "a wife, among most tribes, is no better than a beast of burden... While the men loiter out the day in sloth, or spend it in amusement, the women are condemned to incessant toil."<sup>119</sup>

#### The Primitive Mind.

The second aspect of savage life which continues to occupy Robertson's attention throughout the course of the History is the functioning of the primitive mind.

As we have seen, Robertson is particularly attentive to the interplay between language and thought within the mind of a savage, "when the intellectual powers are just beginning to unfold, and their first feeble exertions are directed towards a few objects of primary necessity and use; when the faculties of the mind are so limited, as not to have formed abstract or general ideas; when language is so barren as to be destitute of names to distinguish anything that is not perceived by some of the senses; it is preposterous to expect that man should be capable of tracing with accuracy the relation between cause and effect; or to suppose that he should rise from the contemplation of the one to the knowledge of the other, and form just conceptions of a Deity, as the Creator and Governor of the universe."<sup>120</sup> This conception is amplified in his statement that "the first ideas of every human being must be such as he receives by the senses. But, in the mind of man, while in the savage state, there seem to be hardly any ideas but what enter by this avenue... Satisfied with considering.. [visible objects].. under that simple mode, in which they appear to him, as separate and detached, he neither combines them so as to form general classes, nor contemplates their qualities apart, nor bestows a thought upon the operations of his own mind concerning them. Thus he is unacquainted with all the ideas which have been denominated universal, or abstract, or of reflection."<sup>121</sup> He

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<sup>118</sup> History, I, p.330.

<sup>119</sup> History, I, p.320.

<sup>120</sup> History, I, pp.380-381.

<sup>121</sup> History, I, p.312.

He further points out that "it is the genius of savages to act from the impulse of present passion. They have neither foresight nor temper to form complicated arrangements with respect to their future conduct."<sup>122</sup> He is thus enabled to argue that "even among the most enlightened people, the period of authentic history is extremely short, and every thing prior to that is fabulous or obscure. It is not surprising, then, that the unlettered inhabitants of America, who have no solicitude about futurity, and little curiosity concerning what is past, should be altogether unacquainted with their own original."<sup>123</sup>

Robertson accounts for this lack of curiosity and speculation in a variety of ways. On the one hand, he argues that "in situations where no extraordinary effort, either of ingenuity or labour is requisite, in order to satisfy the simple demands of nature, the powers of the mind are so seldom roused to any exertion, that the rational faculties continue almost dormant and unexercised."<sup>124</sup> He remarks that the American savages "may be patient and assiduous in labour, they can copy with a servile and minute accuracy, but discover little invention, and no talents for dispatch."<sup>125</sup> But on the other hand, he can argue that "what, among polished nations, is called speculative reasoning or research, is altogether unknown in the rude state of society, and never becomes the occupation or amusement of the human faculties, until man be so far improved as to have secured, with certainty, the means of subsistence, as well as the possession of leisure and tranquillity."<sup>126</sup> In support of which, he can write that "it is not then in the early or heroic ages of Greece, that we can expect to observe the science of navigation, and the spirit of discovery, making any considerable progress. During that period of disorder and ignorance, a thousand causes concurred in

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<sup>122</sup> History, I, pp.403-404.

<sup>123</sup> History, I, p.265.

<sup>124</sup> History, I, p.313.

<sup>125</sup> History, I, p.378.

<sup>126</sup> History, I, p.309.

restraining curiosity and enterprise within very narrow bounds."<sup>127</sup>

But Robertson also observes that "in the early ages of society, while the condition of man is simple and rude, his reason is but little exercised, and his desires move within a very narrow sphere. Hence arise two remarkable characteristics of the human mind, in this state. Its intellectual powers are extremely limited; its emotions and efforts are few and languid. Both these distinctions are conspicuous among the rudest and most improved of the American tribes, and constitute a striking part in their description."<sup>128</sup> And thus, he is able to conclude that "as the condition of man in the savage state is unfavourable to the progress of the understanding, it has a tendency likewise, in some respects, to check the exercise of affection, and to render the heart contracted."<sup>129</sup>

#### IV

##### Deficiencies of Primitive Societies.

Throughout the History, Robertson makes a great many other observations of primitive life, and many of the inevitable evaluations he makes of these observations are disapproving.

For example, he describes the savage's environment as providing a scanty and precarious subsistence<sup>130</sup> among dreary forests<sup>131</sup>, surrounded by hardships and calamities.<sup>132</sup> Thomson indicated the same dislike of savage wilds when he approvingly wrote that Britain possesses:

"... No savage Alp, the Den  
of Wolves, and Bears, and monstrous things obscene,<sup>133</sup>  
That vex the Swain and waste the Country round,..."

In physiological description as we have seen, Robertson notes that "the Americans are so far from being eminent for any superior perfection in their form, that one should rather suspect some peculiar imbecillity in the race, from the extraordinary number of individuals who are deformed, dwarfish, mutilated, blind, or deaf."<sup>134</sup> Moreover he observes that "the beardless countenance and smooth skin of the

<sup>127</sup>History, I, p.12.

<sup>128</sup>History, I, p.309.

<sup>129</sup>History, I, p.404.

<sup>130</sup>History, I, p.295.

<sup>131</sup>History, I, p.353.

<sup>132</sup>History, II, p.164.

<sup>133</sup>James Thomson, Liberty, IV, 596-598 (London, 1735), p.33.

<sup>134</sup>History, I, p.298.



American seems to indicate a defect of vigour, occasioned by some vice in his frame. He is destitute of one sign of manhood and of strength."<sup>135</sup>

He points out a primitive lack of refinement when he writes that chastity "is an idea too refined for a savage, and suggested by a delicacy of sentiment and affection to which he is a stranger."<sup>136</sup> In this he echoes a common belief of the period which Lord Kames expressed in stating that "the most polished nations differ only from savages in refinement of taste, which being productive of nice and delicate feelings, is the source of pleasure and pain, more exquisite than savages are susceptible of."<sup>137</sup>

This lack of refinement may particularly be seen in "that taciturnity which is so disgusting to men used to the open intercourse of social conversation. When they are not engaged in action, the Americans often sit whole days in one posture without opening their lips."<sup>138</sup> And he also argues that "men, who are not habituated to a liberal communication of their own sentiments and wishes, are apt to be so distrustful, as to place little confidence in others, and to have recourse to an insidious craft, in accomplishing their own purposes."<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, he gives as an example of this craft, "the natives of Peru", who "were engaged above thirty years, in concerting the plan of that insurrection, under the viceroyalty of the marquis de Villa Garcia, and although to a great number of all different ranks, no indication of it ever transpired during that long period; no man, betrayed his trust, or, by an unguarded look, or rash word, gave rise to any suspicion of what was intended."<sup>140</sup>

The lack of compassion among American savages also occupies a great deal of his attention, when he speaks of their "hardness of heart, and insensibility, remarkable in all savage nations,"<sup>141</sup>

<sup>135</sup>History, I, pp.290-291.

<sup>136</sup>History, I, p.293.

<sup>137</sup>Lord Kames, Essays on the Principles of Morality and Religion, (Edinburgh, 1751), p.144, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934), p.98.

<sup>138</sup>History, I, p.408.

<sup>139</sup>History, I, p.408.

<sup>140</sup>History, I, p.409.

<sup>141</sup>History, I, p.405.



their cold indifference to suffering,<sup>142</sup> their custom of childslaying, which "stifles the voice of nature,"<sup>143</sup> and also their slaying of the aged,<sup>144</sup> and finally, their treatment of women as beasts of burden,<sup>145</sup> and also their harshness to animals.<sup>146</sup> He further points out that "interest is not... the most frequent or the most powerful motive of the incessant hostilities among rude nations. These must be imputed to the passion of revenge, which rages with such violence in the breast of savages, that eagerness to gratify it may be considered as the distinguishing characteristic of men, in their uncivilized state."<sup>147</sup> So great is this motive, in fact, that "as it is impossible to appease the fell spirit of revenge which rages in the heart of a savage, this frequently prompts the Americans to devour those unhappy persons, who have been the victims of their cruelty."<sup>148</sup>

#### Disparagement of Primitive Societies.

These observations lead Robertson to speak over and over again of the "rudeness" of the primitive Americans, when, for instance, he observes that Americans are so rude as not to know their own history,<sup>149</sup> the rudest form of man conceivable,<sup>150</sup> rude enough to be called savage,<sup>151</sup> and in their very rudest state in New Holland,<sup>152</sup> or alternatively, on the plains of South America.<sup>153</sup>

In the manner of Millar, then, Robertson is frequently led to point out that primitive man approaches "brute creation" in the eyes of philosophers<sup>155</sup>, conquistadors<sup>156</sup>, and from his own perspective<sup>157</sup>. And although he deplores that "others have

<sup>142</sup>History, I, p.406.

<sup>143</sup>History, I, p.322.

<sup>144</sup>History, I, p.401.

<sup>145</sup>History, I, p.320.

<sup>146</sup>History, I, p.407.

<sup>147</sup>History, I, p.350.

<sup>148</sup>History, I, p.360.

<sup>149</sup>History, I, p.265.

<sup>150</sup>History, I, p.282.

<sup>151</sup>History, I, p.283.

<sup>152</sup>History, I, note lviii, p.472.

<sup>153</sup>History, I, p.325.

<sup>155</sup>History, I, p.315.

<sup>156</sup>History, II, p.180.

<sup>157</sup>History, I, p.332.

imagined, that, under the influence of an unkindly climate, which checks and enervates the principle of life, man never attained in America the perfection which belongs to his nature, but remained an animal of an inferior order, defective in the vigour of his bodily frame, and destitute of sensibility, as well as of force, in the operations of his mind."<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, he observes that among other resemblances between savages and animals are the savage's thoughtless levity and improvident instinct<sup>159</sup>, his immediate concern with a small circle of objects<sup>160</sup>, his instinctive animal rage<sup>161</sup>, and even in the violence of his illnesses<sup>162</sup>. Among other writers of Robertson's period, John Gregory goes even farther in observing that "man in his savage state is, in some respects, in a worse condition than any other animal. He has indeed superior faculties, but as he does not possess, in so great a degree as other animals, the internal principle of instinct to direct these faculties to his greatest good, they are often perverted in such a manner as to render him more unhappy."<sup>163</sup> Gregory also writes, however, that savage man "possesses bodily strength, agility, health and what are called the animal faculties in greater perfection, than Men in the more advanced state of society, but the nobler and more distinguishing principles of human Nature lie in a great measure dormant."<sup>164</sup> Monboddo, however, draws a different conclusion from Gregory's former observation, in stating that "savages... are very much superior to us in natural strength and firmness of Mind. They are also superior to us in natural sagacity."<sup>165</sup>

Robertson's evaluation of the savage condition becomes even less favorable when he applies the standards of his own era directly to primitive conditions, in a manner reminiscent of Tabitha Bramble in Smollett's Humphry Clinker.<sup>166</sup> For example, at times

<sup>158</sup> History, I, p.287.

<sup>159</sup> History, I, p.310.

<sup>160</sup> History, I, p.309.

<sup>161</sup> History, I, p.351.

<sup>162</sup> History, I, p.306.

<sup>163</sup> John Gregory, Comparative View, viii, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists: Some Reconsiderations" in ELH, 12 (1945), p.208.

<sup>164</sup> John Gregory, Comparative View, ix, cited by R.H.Pearce, "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists: Some Reconsiderations" in ELH 12 (1945), p.208.

<sup>165</sup> Lord Monboddo, Antient Metaphysics, III, p.218, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore 1934), p.296.

<sup>166</sup> Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, (New York, 1960), p.197.

he may deduce that "if the nature of the intercourse between the sexes varies so much in persons of different rank in polished societies, the condition of man, while he remains uncivilized, must occasion a variation still more apparent."<sup>167</sup> Or further, he may observe that "in civilised life, those persons, who, by their situation, have but a few objects of pursuit on which their minds incessantly dwell, are most remarkable for low artifice in carrying on their little projects. Among savages, whose views are equally confined, and their attention no less persevering, those circumstances must operate still more powerfully, and gradually accustom them to a disingenuous subtlety in all their transactions."<sup>168</sup> It may amuse him to venture "to call this mode of anointing and painting their bodies, the dress of the Americans. This is agreeable to their own idiom. As they never stir abroad if they are not completely anointed; they excuse themselves when in this situation by saying, that they cannot appear because they are naked."<sup>169</sup> But he evinces a shock bordering on disgust in noting of the Peruvians that "in one particular, their manners appear to have been more barbarous than those of most rude tribes... they devoured both flesh and fish perfectly raw, and astonished the Spaniards with a practice repugnant to the ideas of all civilised people."<sup>170</sup>

Robertson himself seems capable of forgetting that savages are in fact people. For although he is able to exclaim, referring to Cortes, that "to usurp a jurisdiction which could not belong to a stranger, who assumed no higher character than that of an ambassador from a foreign prince, and, under colour of it, to inflict a capital punishment on men whose conduct entitled them to esteem, appears an act of barbarous cruelty."<sup>171</sup> Yet he is also able to note that "the conquest of the two great empires of

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<sup>167</sup> History, I, p.295.

<sup>168</sup> History, I, p.295.

<sup>169</sup> History, I, note lxxvi, p.481.

<sup>170</sup> History, II, pp.325-326.

<sup>171</sup> History, II, p.63.

Mexico and Peru forms the most splendid and interesting period in the history of America,"<sup>172</sup> and to speak of "Velasquez de Leon, an impetuous and gallant young man" who "exclaimed with impatience" to Cortes in the presence of Montezuma, "Why waste more time in vain? Let us either seize him instantly, or stab him to the heart."<sup>173</sup> Whereas he can temper these judgments with such statements as "The barbarity of the conquerors stained the glory which they acquired by this complete victory,"<sup>174</sup> it is also possible for him to forget completely about the Indians in observing that from California's "vicinity to Cenaloa and Sonora, it is probable, that if the population of these provinces shall increase in the manner which I have supposed [immigration], California may, by degrees, receive from them such a recruit of inhabitants, as to be no longer reckoned among the desolate and useless districts of the Spanish empire."<sup>175</sup>

#### Virtues of Primitive Conditions

Robertson is also able to observe certain positive features of primitive conditions. In speaking of the primitive mind, for example, he is also able to note that "however narrow the bounds may be within which the knowledge of a savage is circumscribed, he possesses thoroughly that small portion of it which he has attained. It was not communicated to him by formal instruction; he does not attend to it as matter of mere speculation and curiosity; it is the result of his own observation, the fruit of his own experience, accommodated to his condition and exigencies."<sup>176</sup> He observes, too, that while savages are engaged in hunting, "they shake off the indolence peculiar to their nature, the latent powers and vigour of their minds are roused, and they become active, persevering, and indefatigable... Their reason and their senses, being constantly directed towards this

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<sup>172</sup>History, II, p.267.

<sup>173</sup>History, II, p.59.

<sup>174</sup>History, II, p.206.

<sup>175</sup>History, II, p.330.

<sup>176</sup>History, I, p.402.



one object, the former displays such fertility of invention, and the latter acquires such a degree of acuteness, as appear almost incredible."<sup>177</sup> Blair, too, used the same argument in his explanation that "in a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undissipated mind broods over them more; they strike the imagination, and fire the passions in a higher degree; and of consequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the same events when scattered through the wide circle of more varied action, and cultivated life."<sup>178</sup>

Robertson also points out certain moral virtues possessed by primitive communities, when he writes that "the number of men in each tribe is so small, the difficulty of rearing new members, amidst the hardships and dangers of savage life so great, that the life of a citizen is extremely precious, and the preservation of it becomes a capital object of their policy."<sup>179</sup> He further notes that the primitive peoples of temperate regions "have defended their liberty with persevering fortitude against the Europeans, who subdued the other rude nations of America with the greatest ease."<sup>180</sup> Savage stoicism also catches Robertson's attention, and he observes that "all the trials, customary in America, when a youth is admitted into the class of warriors, or when a warrior is promoted to the dignity of captain or chief, are accommodated to this idea of manliness. They are not displays of valour, but of patience; they are not exhibitions of their ability to offend, but of their capacity to suffer."<sup>181</sup>

We have already observed Robertson applying the patterns of his society to the conditions of the savages, to their great disadvantage. But it was also possible for him to make a similar comparison flattering primitive societies, saying that "a general state of promiscuous intercourse between the sexes never existed but in the imagination of poets... Accordingly, in America,

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<sup>177</sup>History, Volume I, p.327.

<sup>178</sup>Hugh Blair, "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal," prefaced to Ossian's Poems, (London, 1763), p.22.

<sup>179</sup>History, I, pp.355-356.

<sup>180</sup>History, I, p.416.

<sup>181</sup>History, I, p.363.



even among the rudest tribes, a regular union between husband and wife was universal, and the rights of marriage were understood and recognized."<sup>182</sup> Or, for another example, he also writes that "much political wisdom is said to be displayed in conducting the affairs of...[tribal].. communities. The council of old men in an American tribe, deliberating upon its interests, and determining with respect to peace or war, has been compared to the senate in more polished nations."<sup>183</sup>

At still other times, he is able to write that the "state of primeval simplicity, which was known in our continent only by the fanciful description of poets, really existed in the other,"<sup>184</sup> and to observe that "in the simplicity of the savage state, when man is not oppressed with labour, or enervated by luxury, or disquieted with care, we are apt to imagine that his life will flow on almost untroubled by disease or suffering, until his days be terminated, in extreme old age, by the gradual decays of nature. We find, accordingly, among the Americans, as well as among other rude people, persons, whose decrepit and shrivelled form seems to indicate an extraordinary length of life."<sup>185</sup> He points out that "superstition... in the rudest periods of society is either altogether unknown, or wastes its force in childish unmeaning practices."<sup>186</sup> In other comparisons between his own and primitive American societies, he writes that the American ability to endure torment "flows from a principle of honour, instilled early and cultivated with such care, as to inspire man in his rudest state with an heroic magnanimity, to which philosophy hath endeavoured, in vain, to form him, when more highly improved and polished."<sup>187</sup> At another point, he describes how "the Spaniards suddenly drew their swords, and rushed upon the Indians, defenceless and astonished at an act of treachery which exceeded the conception of undesigning men."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> History, I, p.318.

<sup>183</sup> History, I, p.403.

<sup>184</sup> History, I, pp.282-283.

<sup>185</sup> History, I, p.305.

<sup>186</sup> History, I, p.349.

<sup>187</sup> History, I, p.365.

<sup>188</sup> History, I, p. 181.

Sympathetic View of Primitive Man.

In this manner, then, Robertson balances his view, by noting that "if there be defects or vices peculiar to the savage state, there are, likewise, virtues which it inspires, and good qualities, to the exercise of which it is friendly."<sup>189</sup> If at times he is able to forget that savages constitute part of a population, at other times he genuinely attempts to understand them as people.

For example, he observes that "in every stage of society, the faculties, the sentiments and desires of men are so accommodated to their own state, that they become standards of excellence to themselves, they affix the idea of perfection and happiness to those attainments which resemble their own, and wherever the objects and enjoyments to which they have been accustomed are wanting, confidently pronounce a people barbarous and miserable. Hence the mutual contempt with which the members of communities, unequal in their degrees of improvement, regard each other."<sup>190</sup> Incidentally, in this connection, we might note Henry Mackenzie's statement, that "certain it is that I am far from being a single instance, of one who had even attained maturity in Europe, and yet found his mind so accommodated, by the habit of a few years, to Indian manners, as to leave the country with regret."<sup>191</sup>

Robertson points out that "far from complaining of their own situation, or viewing that of men in a more improved state with admiration or envy, they regard themselves as the standard of excellence, as beings the best entitled, as well as the most perfectly qualified to enjoy real happiness."<sup>192</sup> And he sees that "the rude Americans, fond of their own pursuits, and satisfied with their own lot, are equally unable to comprehend the intention or utility of the various accommodations, which, in more polished society, are deemed essential to the comfort of life."<sup>193</sup> So he writes, "Void of foresight, as well as free from care themselves, and

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<sup>189</sup>History, I, pp.409-410.

<sup>190</sup>History, I, p.284.

<sup>191</sup>Henry Mackenzie, The Man of the World, II (London, 1773), p.251, cited by Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934), note, p.61.

<sup>192</sup>History, I, p.412.

<sup>193</sup>History, I, p.412.

delighted with that state of indolent security, they wonder at the anxious precautions, the unceasing industry, and complicated arrangements of Europeans in guarding against distant evils, or providing for future wants, exclaim against their preposterous folly, in thus multiplying the troubles, and increasing the labour of life."<sup>194</sup> And "they behold with amazement the inequality of rank, and the subordination which take place in civilized life, and consider the voluntary submission of one man to another, as a renunciation, no less base than unaccountable, of the first distinction of humanity."<sup>195</sup>

He shows further understanding of the plight of the savage in observing that "the Indians, courting [a union with a European] offered their daughter in marriage to their new guest; and when [the European] did not accept the proffered alliance, [the Indian] naturally imputed it to pride and to their contempt of them as an inferior order of beings."<sup>197</sup>

But he is at his most sympathetic, when he observes that "arts, in the early ages of society, are so few and so simple, that each man is sufficiently master of them all, to gratify every demand of his own limited desires. The savage can form his bow, point his arrows, rear his hut, and hollow his canoe, without calling in the aid of any hand more skilful than his own."<sup>198</sup> He points out that "disquisitions which appear the most necessary and important to men in one state of society, never occur to those in another... among savages, who have no property to estimate, no hoarded treasures to count, no variety of objects or multiplicity of ideas to enumerate, arithmetic is a superfluous and useless art. Accordingly, among some tribes in America it seems to be quite unknown."<sup>199</sup> He also observes that "the maxims by which they regulate their military operations,

<sup>194</sup> History, I, p.412.

<sup>195</sup> History, I, p.412.

<sup>196</sup> History, I, pp.387-388.

<sup>197</sup> History, III, p.54.

<sup>198</sup> History, II, p.276.

<sup>199</sup> History, I, p.310.

though extremely different from those which take place among more civilized and populous nations, are well suited to their own political state, and the nature of the country in which they act."<sup>200</sup> Yet, he can comment elsewhere that "the people of Chili, the most gallant and high-spirited of all the Americans... attack their enemies in the open field; their troops are ranged in regular order; their battalions advance to the charge not only with courage, but with discipline."<sup>201</sup>

It also occurs to Robertson with reference to American canoes that 'the form as well as materials of all these various species of vessels is well adapted to the service for which they are destined; and the more minutely they are examined, the mechanism of their structure, as well as neatness of their fabric, will appear the more admirable."<sup>202</sup> And despite his earlier ridicule of savage body paint, he concedes some rationality to the American savages who; "at certain seasons, temper paint of different colours with those unctious substances, and bedaub themselves plentifully with the composition. Sheathed with this impenetrable varnish, their skins are not only protected from the penetrating heat of the sun, but, as all the innumerable tribes of insects have an antipathy to the smell or taste of that mixture, they are delivered from their teasing persecution, which, amidst forests and marshes, especially in the warmer regions, must have been altogether intolerable in their state of nakedness."<sup>203</sup>

In summary, then, Robertson's attitudes toward primitive societies alternate between positions of sympathy and hostility. However, the following quotation may be regarded as indicative of his more constant evaluative perspectives: "In the savage state, hardships and fatigue violently assault the constitution. In

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<sup>200</sup> History, I, p.353.

<sup>201</sup> History, I, note lxxiv, P.480.

<sup>202</sup> History, I, p.377.

polished societies, intemperance undermines it. It is not easy to determine which of them operates with most fatal effect, or tends most to abridge human life." But, "the influence of the former is certainly the most extensive."<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup>History, I, pp.371-372.

<sup>204</sup>History, I, p.307.



### Conclusion

In conclusion, it would seem appropriate to summarize some of the arguments which have been discussed during the course of the previous chapters.

Ferguson (I) considers primitive societies in relation to the history of civil society, in an attempt to demonstrate certain universal qualities of human character which have been realized in different ways throughout the ages. (II) He indicates his determination to avoid ethnocentric bias, emphasizing several problems encountered in attempting to examine 'progress', and he declares his intention to formulate general observations rather than to compile individual facts. He writes in support of justice, happiness, and the public good, while observing that these values are often opposed in his own society by a narrow interest in wealth, property, interest, and social rank. (III) He applies these methods and prejudices to a discussion of the climatic and physiological forces which shape the different realizations of certain universal qualities of human character. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of free will in determining the nature of these realizations, and arrives at a definition of 'cultivated' based on the ability of a member of a society to realize productively the inner potential of his character. Although he observes deficiencies in primitive societies, he comments that the absence of wealth and social rank has yielded such societies many advantages. (IV) Finally, he draws a parallel between contemporary primitive societies and his own primitive British ancestors, and observes certain similarities between some aspects of primitive life and aspects of his own society. He is aware that the complex superstructure which characterizes more civilized cultures is irrelevant to the needs of the primitive. As a result, he is able to admire, and recommend to his own society, the vigorous spirit of mind and heart which he finds exemplified in primitive man.

Millar (I) considers primitive societies in relation to the origin of the distinction of ranks, in an attempt to demonstrate the advantages which the development of civilized institutions has brought to his own culture. (II) He spends little time self-

examining his methods and prejudices, despite a variety of contradictions implicit in his assumptions and factual observations. However, he indicates a firm belief in the values of utility, liberty, opulence, commerce, and industriousness. (III and IV) Millar's inextricable description and evaluation of primitive societies reflect the range of arguments which he is able to employ in support of his own society's values. He suggests that most primitive virtues are due to the absence of civilized institutions which, if properly managed, would lead to greater improvements within a society.

Robertson (I) considers primitive societies in relation to the Spanish conquest of America, in an attempt to determine the hierarchical position of primitive societies among other societies. (II) He indicates his determination to utilize sources impartially, declaring his intention of balancing positive and negative evaluations of primitive societies, and he demonstrates a particular interest in the relationship between language and thought. (III) He determines the hierarchical position of primitive societies by examining their development of commerce, social union, private property, and social distinctions, as well as their development of philosophical and linguistic accuracy. He discusses the climatic and physiological forces which shape the hierarchical characteristics of a society. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of cultural forces in determining the nature of these characteristics, indicating a particular interest in savage indolence and the savage mind. (IV) Finally, he balances an awareness and disparagement of savage deficiencies against an awareness of the virtues of the savage condition. But he also observes that vice is more extensive in uncivilized societies.

Thus, among the eighteenth-century Scots we have studied, Ferguson's appraisal of primitive societies is clearly the most sympathetic, Millar's the least sympathetic, while Robertson is the most objective.

Finally, it is of interest with reference to this last observation, to note the following statement by the eminent anthropologist, Clifford Geertz:

"The bridge between our world and that of our subjects

(extinct, opaque, or merely tattered) lies not in personal confrontation - which, so far as it occurs, corrupts both them and us. It lies in a kind of experimental mind-reading.. One understands the thought of savages neither by mere introspection nor by mere observation, but by attempting to think as they think and with their materials."<sup>1</sup>

For in our own day, Millar has fallen into almost complete neglect. Robertson remains admired for his ability to tell a good story and for his contribution to historiography. But Ferguson - whose observations from a sympathetic vantage point provided a major stimulus to such influential thinkers as Herder and Karl Marx - continues to hold both the respect and admiration which he once enjoyed during the Scottish renaissance two hundred years ago.

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<sup>1</sup>Clifford Geertz, "The Cerebral Savage - On the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss," Encounter (April, 1967), p.31.

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